










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Erfahrungsbericht zum Auslandssemester an der RMIT University

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Study abroad semester in MELBOURNE at RMIT (Feb-Jun)



The aspects, which are important and good to know when you are applying for a semester in Australia are very well explained in other reports and by the Gostralia team. Therefore, I will focus on my experience in Melbourne to help you choose your destination.

1 Why RMIT in Melbourne

Between finishing school and starting university I spent a while in New Zealand and fell in love with the landscape and the very charming people. This was honestly my starting point for researching Australia. I soon found out, that the education in Australia is rated one of the best in the world. This was the main reason why I finally set my heart on Australia. There are certainly other places that would have been interesting to me such as Argentina which fascinates me. Going there would have given me the opportunity to practice my very basic Spanish skills as well as seeing a culture different to the ones I got to know so far. The Australian culture is not extremely different to the one in Europe but there are different approaches to life. The people over there have a very welcoming and easy going mentality. To give you amazing memories of their country, is one of their priorities. They send you off to places they have heard of but

have never been. That has to be said, Australians do not travel even half as much as Germans. Therefore, you are more likely to meet groups of Germans than Australians when exploring the country. Before I went to Melbourne I did not know much about it. From my research into Australia I had learned that Melbourne was regarded as the cultural capital of Australia. With 9 universities and its attraction to businesses Melbourne appears rather sophisticated. Within Melbourne RMIT was the best match as it is “among the world's top 100 universities in Art and Design”¹. The excellent education also has got a steep price but thanks to the Auslands-BAföG it is made possible.

2 Course Structure at RMIT

Studying in Australia is set up similar to the education we receive at school in Germany. Instead of working towards one usually stressful phase of writing exams and handing in assignments per semester, Australian students have several assignments throughout the semester. Those assignments are part of the overall grade. Usually the assignments during the semester all add up to no less than 50% of the grade. The other up to 50% can be gained in the final work of the semester. That way working in time during the semester is already rewarded. This gives an additional motivation not to build up the stress towards the end of the semester. At the same time, it takes away the individual time management, a skill which is certainly important to have.

2.1 Support of Internationals

The introduction to RMIT was impressive. 600 new internationals were about to start their first and maybe only semester in Melbourne. The university staff was able to immediately create interest and spread confidence. During the orientation week there were many exciting events around the campus. Free food, give-aways and parties were offered almost every day. It was a great time to meet likeminded people and to get to know the city and the different campuses.

There are certain subjects which international students staying for only one semester are allowed to take without difficulties. This is something I only learned after I went through the whole process of finding courses and applying for them. I was denied three of my four choices to begin with. Nevertheless, I was able to contact the professors of the classes I desired to attend and received positive answers to all of them.

2.2 Work Life Balance

The outdoor and social activities seem to play a major role at RMIT. Almost every sport imaginable is available and if it doesn't have its own club yet it might get one as soon as someone expresses the need for it. The activities can be categorised into trips and

¹ <http://www.rmit.edu.au/about/our-education/reputation-and-rankings/qs-world-university-rankings>

tours within Melbourne and its surrounding areas, and the various clubs including arts and music as well as the water sports club where one can try out e.g. wakeboarding and surfing. This wide range of activities suggests the assumption that the work life balance is paid a lot of attention to. Instead of pushing for more work the university encourages students to take breaks in which one can either sleep in special rooms provided or be physically active. That way the mind can properly rest and regain energy to continue later. Alongside with the work life balance, the team player skills are also targeted. During my time at RMIT I was able to participate in several group activities such as basketball and hiking tours. This made me come together with people I would not have met otherwise.

2.3 Equipment of RMIT

RMIT University is excellently equipped with modern technology and tools. The focus of the university is slightly different to the one at Hochschule Niederrhein. Photography and Business seem to receive slightly more support than other courses. The business buildings are all perfectly modern in an efficient as well as aesthetic way. Their lecture rooms feel like movie theatres and the many learning spaces are located on balconies or quiet corners. When it comes to photography the university supplies the best and most modern tools desirable. All students with an RMIT student ID are allowed to rent the equipment and studio spaces for free. The fact that one does not have to struggle to find the right tools makes it easier to concentrate on the actual task to improve one's skills. There are lights/flashes with the necessary power supply ready to use in the studios but there are also portable versions that are lighter so that one can use them outdoors or in a personal or interesting location indoors. I found myself getting onto the tram more than once with a big backpack full of batteries and lamps, a suitcase with a DSLR, including an impressive looking lens and a tripod and stands for my lights poking out on either side. At the time I wished for an assistant helping me carry the dozens of kilos but at the same time I felt like a professional at the start of her career.

The library is equipped with Microsoft PCs as well as Apple computers as depending on the project and subject either one can be more useful at times. Especially the creative industry is dominated by Apple products, having access to them is therefore rather useful. When it comes to books online as well as offline the staff will order new books if students need them for their work. One can also order a book from a different campus to the one that is closest to oneself.

3 Living in Melbourne

Part of the experience of studying at RMIT was to be in Melbourne. The university has three campuses spread over the city. The main city campus is in the heart of Melbourne. For lunch one does not have to put up with the food on campus but one can go to one of the many restaurants or take away shops. As the Japanese population is very big in the city there are sushi stores everywhere offering a healthy and cheap alternative to a sandwich. If one needs an energy push in between studying there are hundreds of irresistibly good cafés everywhere. Melbourne's coffee addiction comes from the many Italians who came to Melbourne over the years. The city is tolerant in every sense and is home to a high number of different cultures and nationalities. If

there is anything specific you are looking for you will be most likely to find it here. Having such variety makes everybody feel at home and accepted.

When working in a field where customers and trend analysis are major components, the place one lives in is extremely important. Having one's finger on the pulse of the time is by far more achievable in a modern city going with the time. Melbourne happens to be one of those cities and the inhabitants love it for the same reason.

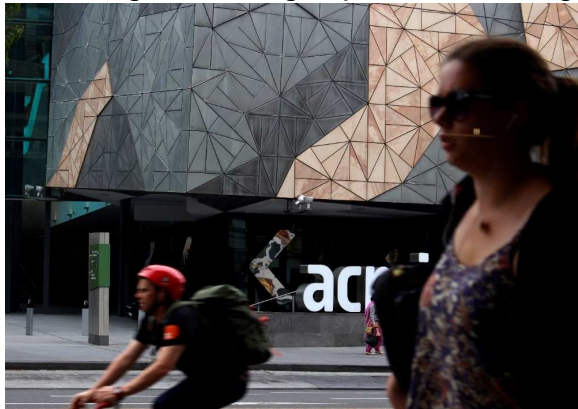


Melbourne's CBD

Melbourne has just been voted the world's most liveable city again. It has been in this top position since 2011 voted number one by the Economist's global liveability survey for the sixth time. Culture and environment were the categories in which Melbourne earned substantially more points than the next top city, Vienna. Thinking of Australia one might first imagine beaches, heat and the outback. Melbourne does not match this image. It is known for its inconsistent weather which can change many times during the day. They call it the four seasons in one day. When I arrived in mid-February it was still warm and for one week even extremely hot but this could change within minutes. That is why we were given thin plastic coats as a giveaway by RMIT. If you are looking for a desert Melbourne is definitely not the right place either. Thanks to the very common rain, which is still nothing compared to some parts of Germany or the Netherlands, the area is fairly green for most of the year. If you came to Melbourne for breath taking beaches, you will most likely be disappointed as well. The city is actually built close the ocean, as most Australian cities, but it is situated in a big bay. The water in this bay is relatively dirty as there is not enough movement. Hence the beaches are full of algae. Once you get out of the bay the beaches and landscape become more interesting but expect to travel for around two hours in each direction.

If it is not the beaches, nor the weather, what makes Melbourne as a city so attractive to live in? Melbourne has many universities which are well known for their high standards and excellent education. Students come from all over the world to study here for one semester up to staying for their whole education. When walking through the

city the enormous number of students and therefore young population is very visible. Due to a major economic boom in the late 19th century caused by finding a lot of gold, the city used to be very wealthy. That was when Melbourne, as a city, came to life. Nowadays, the buildings from the Victorian age share the place with trend-leading modern apartment and business blocks and it makes for a unique image. Even without any architecture background one simply has to find Melbourne interesting RMIT's business building is only one of the examples. Melbourne has got something interesting to offer any time during the week or the year and most of it is for free, attracting all the poor students. From light festivals to night markets, European food festivals to food truck events, Melbourne is proud of offering opportunities to maintain a healthy work-life balance. The numerous museums, all located around the city centre, are mostly free and offer anything from ancient Asian art up to modern screen technologies. Having a quick browse to get inspiration is possible and recommendable.



acmi Australian Centre for the Moving Image



Hot Air Balloon at Public Light Festival: White Night

When it comes to public places Melbourne clearly aimed at giving room to relax or work in silence. There are many parks, both modern and old, hosting birds like the cockatoo and mammals like the possum. There are various libraries open to everyone. All of them have plenty of space to sit down and work while also providing WIFI free for everybody to use. The convenience of space to work is one of the reasons for why Melbourne is known as one of the best student cities. Other reasons are that spending one's down time in the city is also irresistibly attractive. The metropolitan city is famous for its many roof top bars, cinemas and gardens. Again it is about bringing unlike people together.

Every district of Melbourne has got its own unique vibe. Brunswick for example attracts very unlike people as it offers versatile restaurants as well as shops. Melbourne's CBD is dominated by students and business men and women. Depending on what one feels like or is looking for different districts can be more suitable.

Apart from the field specific experience and education Australia has a landscape to offer which is very different to Germany. Something which can be painful but is part of the charm is the size of the country. Travelling from one city to another can be compared to travelling from one country to another and thereby already skipping a few countries in between in Europe. Australia is about the emptiness one can find everywhere outside the metropolitan cities. Beaches can still feel like you are the first to set your foot on them because you cannot see any other soul. The wildlife still feels like it has got its position almost equal to the humans. If one goes for a night swim around Cairns, it is to be expected to not come back out of the water again. Up north

crocodiles still dominate the waters and demonstrate their power every now and then if someone crosses their territory. Surfers know what they are risking by going into the deep waters where the waves are the best. From time to time they are mistaken for a seal and are attacked by one of the many species of sharks. Australia has many of the most dangerous, poisonous and venomous species in the world and they are incredibly proud of that. Having said that, I have not come across any of the many dangerous snakes nor have I seen any venomous spiders. Australia is a lot safer than Australians pretend it to be.

All in all, I can only recommend going abroad and to Melbourne specifically if you can. It deserves its top ranking when it comes to liveability.



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