

Melbourne Study Abroad Comments 2018

Jack Banaszak '19- Physics Caltech/ Physics University of Melbourne It's

Thursday afternoon in the second week of September in Melbourne. I've just finished class for the week and am preparing for a few weekend endeavors. By this point I've been in the city for nine weeks and one day, and although that's almost as long as a seemingly endless quarter at Caltech, it feels like a blink of an eye out here. Time flies when you're having a blast☺

Over the course of these past nine weeks I have been taking four classes. Math, physics, art, and psychology. There's a lot to mention about those classes, but I'd rather mention the unique experiences to living in downtown Melbourne. Unlike Caltech, the University of Melbourne is located only a few city blocks from the center of the second biggest city in Australia. Even better than that though is the location of the student village (the dorm all of us Techers live in!). While it is one block south of campus its only one block north of down town. This opens up a world of possibilities... when I'm not studying.

Beginning with my arrival in the beginning of July, a week and a half before classes started, I immediately started exploring. First stop, Queen Victoria Market. Just three minutes away from the Student Village, QVM is my favorite place to get food. It's no super market or Walmart, but a daily fresh farmers market with fresh meats, fish, vegetables, fruits, breads, ready-made street food and way more. The whole market is the size of a large city block and can take a long time to navigate the entire thing, so you won't get bored of it. Moreover, its cheap, so you can save your money for fun exciting experiences.

Now that I'd figured out how to feed myself the real exploring began. And just like QVM, getting around is convenient and cheap too! In fact, It's free! For the 20-30 square blocks south of QVM and north of the Yara river the tram is completely free. There are shops, laneways, rooftop bars, clubs, restaurants, street performers, live music bars, and countless friendly people to meet who will gladly recommend ideas to you. This area is called the CBD (Central Business District) and is probably where half of the nightlife takes place. However, if you're getting bored or feeling a little adventurous you can take the trams west of the Student Village, where we live, for a small \$2 fee to the neighborhoods of Fitzroy or Carlton. What's really cool is the different vibes of the different neighborhoods. However, one thing they all share in common is their love of live music and street art. It's a breeze to get around on the trams.

The rewarding experiences aren't limited to the nightlife in down town but include the National Gallery of Victoria, Federation Square, the Sky Deck, The Cricket grounds stadium and St. Kilda Beach. Recently, I attended the National Gallery of Victoria. The gallery is broken up into three portions. The first portion I visited was the free exhibit, which is about three stories high, contains hundreds of pieces of art including classical,

impressionist, east Asian, neoclassical, modern, post-modern and abstract art! The second exhibit was a collection from NYC's MoMA which was interesting to say the least. And finally, the last exhibit is in Federation Square, just across the Yara. While I haven't been to this exhibit or the art exhibits on University of Melbourne's campus, I'm looking forward to checking them out in these next few weeks.

The Sky Deck was the tallest residential building in the Southern Hemisphere until a few years ago. Point being, it's really, really tall! And you can go up there for a small cost, catching a view of the entire city, the surrounding suburbs, the beach and the bay! The bay too is really nice with a cool beach town called St. Kilda. It's about a 20-minute tram ride from the student village but never the less a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon. By this point in my semester I wish I could tell you some things about Australia outside of Melbourne, but I've been too busy doing new things in the city. Enough about the touristy things and on to student life.

As I mentioned earlier, I am taking 4 classes. Since it is my senior year, back home, I've completed the core requirements of my physics option mostly and only have elective and HSS units to fulfill. This is really nice since it takes a bit of pressure off me to perform very well in my classes. In fact, it has freed up enough time for me to pursue a research opportunity out here with my 2 physics professors for sub-atomic particle physics. I'll be working on calibration and construction of the experimental apparatus for SABRE, the first experiment in the southern hemisphere to detect dark matter. While I doubt I'll be around long enough to see the experiment in action, it's a really cool opportunity that I wouldn't have even been able to be involved in at Caltech through SURF!

Some noteworthy things worth mentioning about the University of Melbourne: It is very research driven, but the professors are here to teach! You are their priority, making lectures comprehensive and interesting. There are plenty of research opportunities, whether it be through a class, teacher, or tutorial. The course load is much more relaxed with more time to do it!

There is free beer outside the student union on Tuesdays and Thursdays on campus. There is hot food on campus all day every day, consisting of Italian, Tex-Mex, American, smoothies, Chinese, Indian, Japanese and so on. There are about 50,000 students, so it's easy to make friends even if it takes a little more effort than at Caltech, which such a small group. There are hundreds of social clubs and lots of intramural sports teams. There's actually a Melbourne University Student Exchange club (MUSEX). MUSEX puts on weekly events including, surf camp, boat cruise, bar crawl, surf camp reunion, and various miscellaneous events. I don't want to go into too much detail since discovering these things yourself is half the fun of being in a new city so here's the last thing!

While there is a one-week semester break to travel in during the term, the thing I look forward to the most is the post finals traveling. Our university housing at the Student Village is mandated for a 6 month period, allowing you to stay in Melbourne for up to a month and a half after the exams end in October and before Caltech starts back up in January! Another thing: It's summer out here in November and December – so the perfect time for end of semester travel. I plan to check out Sydney, Tasmania, Ularu, and the sunshine coast with the close international and Australian friends I've made while being out here! JUST DO IT!

Don't SURF at Caltech, Surf in Australia by studying abroad down under!!!!!!!!!!!!

Brent Cahill '19 – Computer Science Caltech/Computing and Information Systems Melbourne

My time so far in Melbourne has been absolutely transformative. Because I grew up only about an hour away from Caltech, I had never really experienced living outside of the Southern California bubble, and this was the first truly extended period of time that I had spent with my closest family member living more than an hour away by car. With that said, I can say without a doubt that I do not regret it for a second. Melbourne is a totally different city to Los Angeles, and that is a refreshing feeling. In Melbourne, you can get anywhere by tram, train, or walking, which is important, because there are so many places to see and things to do. If you get involved in some of the University clubs then you will also have a chance to get out of Melbourne on the weekends, like my time spent on Wine Camp, or on a trip to Mt. Buller for skiing. Victoria (the Australian state Melbourne is in) has a wealth of activities for anyone to do, and it is easy to get out and do them.

I decided to join the Melbourne basketball team, a choice that certainly is not for everyone, but definitely was for me. Even the sports are a little bit more relaxed here, only practicing a fraction of the time of Division III sports at Caltech, while still maintaining an extremely high level of competition. In fact, in two weeks, I will be traveling to the Gold Coast in Queensland for the Australian Division I Finals, an invitation-only tournament for the top 10 teams in the nation, where we hope to walk away with a National Championship.

The academics here operate on a completely different wavelength to those at Caltech as well. Rather than having problem sets due every week, at Melbourne, the learning is significantly more dependent on your own initiative. I have found that at Melbourne, the lecturers teach to the level of the middle 50% of students, rather than at Caltech, where sometimes it feels like they teach to the top 10%, leaving the rest to learn for themselves in the form of problem sets. The workload itself is significantly lighter, but just as – if not more – rewarding as that of Caltech.

I have found myself working more on projects and real-world applications of the subject material here than at Caltech. In my computer science classes, I have had four

assignments so far and every one of them was a hands-on project; designing and implementing software, creating a realistic, randomly-generated landscape, and developing your own game are just some things that I have done since coming here.

My other classes are in the humanities, where the lectures are also very well taught and extremely interesting. Much of what I have been assigned, both in my CS classes and in my humanities classes, has been group work, which is a great way to meet new people and to expand your learning beyond just what a lecturer can teach you, as you gain new insights from your peers' interpretation of the material.

I cannot stress enough just how incredible the city of Melbourne is. It is bright and vibrant, with something going on down every street and laneway you look. Whether you want to go to the Queen Victoria Night Market, see the bathing huts at Brighton Bay, or go out dancing for 48 hours straight at Revolver, there is always something for everyone.

Alexa Lauinger '20 - Biology Caltech/Bioscience Melbourne

I am currently just halfway through my time at University of Melbourne, and I already know that it will be one of the best adventures of my life. I've already experienced so much while I've been here, and I'm excited to see what is to come in the next 3 months. But I am certain that it'll make me love Australia and the university more than I already do.

I have loved the courses I have taken here, especially Australian Flora and Fauna. The information is different than anything I've studied at Caltech, and the classes are set up differently too. One of the most noticeable differences is that there aren't weekly problems sets. I found this to be a benefit because I had more control over what I studied each week based on what information I already knew. All the lectures are also recorded, and you are able to re-watch them online after lecture, which helps a lot with note taking and studying for an exam.

Other than the classes, I also had an amazing time making new friends from all over the world. Especially in our residence complex, the Student Village, you meet people from everywhere, and they all are excited to meet you too. Some of the most interesting things that I've learned abroad have been from these friends. From political culture to lifestyle, these students have shown me the differences between the US and the rest of the world. They've given me a different perspective, and this one of the most valuable things that I have gained since coming to Melbourne. If I'm lucky, maybe I'll be able to visit them in their home countries.

Other than new classes and new friends, I have to love all of Australia for its beauty. In both the city and outside of it, I have some of the most amazing sites and craziest adventures. And, there is always something new to see. One of my favorite trips has been to the Grampians National Park, which you can get to with a few hours train ride.

Not only are wild kangaroos everywhere, but the cliffs and waterfalls on the hike were breath-taking. I would recommend taking a few friends and camping out to enjoy the peaceful forest of Victoria. On the other side of things, the city has so many small cafés and artwork. Definitely participate in some of the city walking tours to find the best places for food or for a quiet place to study. Unfortunately, you will arrive in Melbourne when it's chillier weather, but I can't wait to have a picnic in the botanic gardens when it warms up in October, November and December.

So, although Melbourne has lost the title "most livable city", I still find that it is the most livable for me. From studying in the #1 university in Australia to camping in some of the most beautiful places in the world, this experience has and I believe will always be one of the best in my life. I would recommend Australia to everyone, and I hope I find another reason to come back.

Aris Taychameekiatchai '19 – Biology Caltech/Biology Melbourne

On a typical day, I'll leave the Student Village and turn right towards the University of Melbourne. There's construction everywhere, but who cares because I grabbed an amazing toasty from stovetop for breakfast. I sit down in the classroom for my history tutorial and review the primary sources we're supposed to discuss today. Our tutorial leader is Kathryn, a history professor who specializes in medieval Europe. Being in an upper level history class with professors that very obviously care about your learning as well as peers who will be heading into this field is incredible. I've never had to analyze primary sources in a humanities class at Caltech, nor have I ever felt so compelled to ask questions. If the lower classes were largely illiterate in the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe, why were pamphlets so instrumental in spreading the witch hunting zeal? It's because reading was a group activity. The one person that did know how to read would invite others over, and they'd all talk about witch hunting together. I'm currently enrolled in 2 humanities courses: An introduction to Gender and Witch-hunting in European societies. *I could never take such classes at Caltech, so studying abroad is an amazing opportunity to broaden your horizons.*

My other 2 classes are Stem Cells and Neurochemistry. I won't sugarcoat anything – you can find something very similar to these classes at Caltech. However, the professors here teach from a different perspective. At tech, we like to sit on our high horse and feel a sense of pride at how our professors bring in contemporary studies or guest lecturers to supplement their teaching – but this is not unique to Caltech. Both of my biology classes here do the exact same thing. Although the experimental design aspects are not as heavily emphasized nor tested upon here, as they are at Caltech – it doesn't make the classes here any less rigorous. In conclusion, academically, I didn't feel as if I were losing any of the rigor or mental challenge that Caltech offers, but I'm able to experience unique humanities courses and a different perspective on biology with professors that are extraordinarily friendly and genuinely care about their students.

Of course, the quizzes here aren't open book or take home. On the bright side, they last less than an hour so I never hit those mid exam blues. On the other hand, you do actually have to study a lot for them. Fortunately, it is university policy for every lecture to be recorded! This makes reviewing for exams amazing for auditory learners, like myself. I've recently taken to having the lecture audio play in the background as I play video games – and it actually aids my learning.

The simple lack of weekly problem sets gives me more free time. I initially used this time to explore the city of Melbourne, and I've come to realize that Melbourne succeeds at everything Los Angeles tries to be. Firstly, Melbourne's public transportation is amazing. There's a free tram zone that will take you anywhere within the CBD (Central Business District), and the trams come so often. LA's Gold Line wishes it could be the free tram zone. Fitzroy has amazing Instagram worthy cafes and graffiti. Chinatown is only 2 stops away from the Student village, and I've found places ever better than SGV. The arts district is also nearby and has amazing sculptures and paintings. I didn't even have to give up good boba. There's Gong Cha, Chatime, Sharetea, Gotcha, Yifang Tea, and so many more! The beach is a 20-minute tram ride away, and restaurants of every culture populate the streets. And the best part is that you don't need a car.

Grocery shopping and cooking is also amazing. Queen Victoria Market is an amazing farmers' market with fresh meats and produce. Best of all, it's a 5min walk away. There are also 3 Asian grocery stores within a 5min walk as well. I've been able to cook for myself and experiment with new recipes.

In conclusion, you should study abroad in Melbourne because you don't have to give up anything that Caltech and the LA area offer, but you can gain so much. I didn't have to give up amazing Asian restaurants, boba, the advanced learning. But I gained the ability to travel anywhere I could ever want by tram, the opportunity to take unique humanities classes, a new perspective on biology, and the free time to explore Melbourne and Australia.

Teresa Tran '19 – Biology Caltech/Biology Melbourne

As a person who has always been a little in love with the city aesthetic, living right next to the center of Melbourne has been amazing. At 6:30 in the morning, the sunrise glows off the apartment and office buildings outside my 6th floor bedroom window in the Student Village. From the 10th floor of the psychology building where I have a small class section on Mondays, I'm frequently distracted out of conversation with my peers by the stunning view of the city center. When I'm walking back to class in the evening, I can't help but appreciate living right here as the city glitters in front of me. On a nighttime run next to the Yarra River, the lights of the city reflect off the surface of the water like an impressionist painting, making you almost forget how much exercise hurts.

Melbourne is not only a beautiful city, but everything is incredibly accessible. Whatever you are looking for in terms of food or activities, you'll probably find - and it will also probably be walking distance or just a short (free) tram ride away. One of the first things that people will tell you about Melbourne is that it is very multicultural. Walking down Elizabeth street from the Student Village to the city center, you will encounter so many different cuisines as well as the familiar chain store comforts of America (McDonald's). Another thing that people will tell you is that Melbourne has a very strong coffee culture. It is nearly impossible to walk a block in the city, or even to class on the Melbourne Uni campus, without having at least one more opportunity to grab a coffee. Melbourne also has a bustling nightlife. There are countless bars in the city, as well as in the nearby neighborhoods. You can find arcade themed bars with alcoholic boba, a 55th floor bar with amazing nighttime views of Melbourne, board game bars, and loud clubs filled with people dancing on a weekday night. If you're hungry at 2 AM, it is always possible to drag your friends into the city for a late-night meal, perhaps to a 24/7 Pho place that also serves up a large menu of drinks.

With everything that goes on in the city, from food to shopping to cafes and bars, as well as shows and other events, you can probably be very happy just hanging around Melbourne, going out with friends every day and enjoying city life. But that wouldn't be doing Australia's amazing wildlife and nature parks justice. One of the best things about living in Melbourne is that it is so easy to access wildlife. An hour and a half away on public transport, you can easily spend a day wandering around the Dandenongs, a mountainous area covered in eucalyptus trees and cockatoos. At one of the lookout points near the top, you can appreciate a sprawling view of the land and sky, and even see the high-rises of Melbourne central in the distance. Three hours away is Mornington Peninsula, which has the most beautiful beaches with crystal clear water and colorful bathing houses lining the shores. A little deeper into the peninsula, you can visit Cape Schanck Lighthouse and Arthur's Seat, both of which have stunning views of the ocean. If you're lucky on your hike in Mornington Peninsula State Park, you might run into some Eastern Grey kangaroos. If you're even luckier, one of them might be a mama kangaroo with a little joey snugged up in her pouch.

Melbourne is an amazing place to study abroad, and not just because the longer semester length means the pace is much slower than at Caltech and you have more time to absorb information. Within the city itself, there's so much to do and so much to love. Even if you don't take weekend trips and travel around Australia, you'll still have an amazing experience. But of course, travelling is one of the things that you must do on study abroad in order to make the most of your time (and guaranteed it'll make you want to stay in Australia even more).