

Here's my Study Abroad Story

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**Arcadia: University of Melbourne
Melbourne, Australia**

Major: Media Studies with a Leadership Sequence

Program: The Arcadia program began with a three-day orientation in a small town in Australia, about an hour outside of Melbourne. Students from Arcadia programs all over Australia participated in the orientation, so I had the opportunity to meet a group of 100, instead of just the 18 that were studying in Melbourne. The orientation was fun and informative – we had a lot of sessions but also got free time at the beach and went on a cruise in the harbor.

Upon arrival in Melbourne, those of us staying in Melbourne began a second orientation hosted by the University of Melbourne for international students. There were about 180 international students. We were housed in a University of Melbourne dorm and had local students as orientation leaders. Throughout the four days, we went to the zoo, went surfing, did a scavenger hunt around the city, and participated in a lot of themed parties and competitions. It was an amazing way to meet people and find our way around campus and the city before school started.

The University of Melbourne has what they call “colleges,” which are basically dorms. They vary in size and each has their own dining hall, library, gym, and resources. The colleges have Intramural sports and events – almost like Greek life. Not everyone on the Arcadia program lived in the dorms – the majority lived in a house about 45 minutes away from campus. I lived in University College (UC) with four other students from the Arcadia program. University College has about 260 residents, mostly Australians from the countryside.

In Australia, academics were not program-based like they are in some other countries. Instead, we took all of our classes alongside other University of Melbourne students. We were directly enrolled. I took four classes – all of which had well over three hundred students. Uni, as they call it down there, was very different from CMC. I had lectures that met during the week as well as discussion groups led by a grad student. My classes were mainly full of Aussies, but also had quite a few international students from all over the globe.



Typical Day: I would wake up at 8 am, go down to the dining hall and eat toast with peanut butter or a bowl of cereal – on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays we got eggs and bacon! On Sundays we had a **huge** brunch – just like at CMC – best day of the week. After breakfast I would walk about 10 minutes (max) to lecture, sometimes alone, sometimes with friends who had class at the same time as me. If I had another lecture, I would hang out on campus and read or do work, but if not I would come back to UC and hang out with friends in the courtyard or take the tram into the CBD (Central Business District, aka Downtown). Lunch in the dining hall was served from 12-1:30 pm. In the afternoon I would usually go on a run around the park right behind our dorm (where one of the professional Aussie Rules Football team practiced). Dinner was served from 6-7:30 pm. At night, my friends and I would take the tram into the CBD and go get dumplings or dim sum or just walk around and explore. Chinatown was a very popular destination – Melbourne has amazing Asian food. The benefit of having Australian friends was always knowing where I was and how to get home. On the weekends we would usually have some sort of Intramural sporting event to attend, in which we would all wear our UC gear and paint our faces. At the beginning of the semester, when it was still summer there, we would tram about 45 minutes to St. Kilda to go to the beach.

Highlights: I loved living in the dorm with locals instead of only hanging out with Americans. I actually only had three or four American friends. I also appreciated the fact that I had a dining hall instead of cooking for myself. The intramurals at UC were so much fun. Life at UC had a unique sense of community – we all ate our meals together, played sports together, studied in the library together, watched Aussie rules football together, and went out together. I created friendships that I cherish so much. I even had the opportunity to spend a weekend at my friends' house in the countryside – staying with her family and experiencing the small town she was from really opened me up to Aussie culture.

Challenges: The hardest part was the first three weeks. I felt like I had transferred to a big university and had been placed in a dorm with a bunch of students who had all been friends for a full year. It was hard and intimidating to make friends at first, but once I was in their cliques, I truly had the best time of my life. It forced me to break out of my comfort zone and really try to make friends.

Advice: Do it. Do it. Do it. Accept and understand that the beginning could be hard. But know that it's all worth it. Once you make it through a hard and lonely time in your life, you learn and grow so much. Force yourself to get through it. Force yourself to explore on your own. Oh yeah and DO IT.

