

Go Global with Fisher

Curtin University - Perth, Australia: From a Student's Perspective



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This booklet is designed by past Student Exchange participants in order to share their experience and knowledge with students participating in the Fisher International Student Exchange. Items in this booklet are not endorsed by the Office of Global Business at Fisher College and information contained in this booklet is subject to change.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Home-Stays

- As soon as you receive your certificate of acceptance, rank your preferences of living and send it back to the university. Do this as soon as possible to maximize the chances you will get to live in the building of your choice.
- Ericka Underwood and George James have been recommended by past students. There is more information about all the options for living arrangements through the university.
- Students have found that Vickeryhouse is not the best option; it is recommended that you investigate into this before ranking this option as a preference.

Apartment Search

- Most students chose to live in arrangements through the university, however there are off campus options as well.
- If deciding to do this, there is a university affiliated "housing association," that can provide you with options in your specified price range.
- Apartments located off campus are considered less safe than those on campus.
- Facebook Marketplace can be a great way to find a sublease for the semester. Just as Fisher students are travelling abroad during the fall, so too are students from Curtin.
- Beware of Craigslist. There are a number of scams out there and it has happened to Fisher students in the past. If you are unsure, ask for help from the Fisher International Programs Office staff.

Dorm Living

- Past students have said that on campus housing is the best option for students because students have an easy time meeting each other. The application process is competitive however, so it is recommended to apply as soon as possible.

DOCUMENTS

Passport

- Passports should be secured as soon as possible. They are required not only for travel overseas, but also for application to Comillas and sometimes for securing a living arrangement.
- Check expiration date. In the past students have failed to realize that their passports expire during their trip which can cause serious issues with reentry to the United States.
- It is a good idea to keep several copies of all relevant documents on you at all times: licenses, residency cards,



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passports, visas, enrollment verifications, whatever has been issued to you. This is not required but you may find yourself in a situation in which these things would be extremely helpful to have and save time.

Student Visa

- In 2011, the cost of an Australian visa for American students was \$550.00, payable online at the time of the application. Once approved, the visa is electronically added to passports so that information is not needed to be printed off (though it may not hurt to do so.)
- The visa can be found online and takes about 24 hours to be approved.
- The Welcome Packet, provided after acceptance to Curtin will walk you through the process of obtaining your visa. Be advised that an Australian visa can be more than \$500.
- Make sure to take note as to when your visa expires. Typically, it is close in time to when classes end. Students recommend extending it as soon as you apply for a visa, it will not cost any extra money. If you indicate that you will need to extend your stay, the consulate will call and inquire about the circumstance. Explain that you are a student, it is very simple. If students do not decide to do this, it is possible to extend the visa up to the date it expires for a hefty fee (around \$200) there is a period of 20 days after the time of expiration to extend your visa.
- Visit this website for more information: <http://www.immi.gov.au/students/>
- If students have any questions about obtaining a visa, you can also ask Travel Solutions. Found here: <http://controller.osu.edu/travel/travel-agencies.shtm>. Or call Travel Solutions by phone at 877-678-8785 or 614-750-4020, ask for a Visa Expert.

Health Insurance

- Ohio State requires that outgoing students purchase HTH Supplemental Insurance, this will cover the student's time while studying. However, if a student decides to travel before or after specific program dates, the HTH supplemental insurance will not cover any illness or injury. It is recommended that students contact their health insurance providers before traveling. In the case that a student requires medical attention out of the HTH time period, it is important to know how to deal with copayments, insurance, etc. Specific questions about health insurance can be directed to OIA.

Proof of Age

- When you arrive to Australia, you will need to get a "proof of age," card. American ID's are not accepted. Since it is not recommended to carry your passport around with you at all times, this card is a great alternative. Students can receive one of these at something similar to a DMV, you will receive more information after you arrive.



FOOD AND DRINK

Grocery Stores

- There are grocery stores in walking distance to many of the places that students have chosen to live.
- Coles is a grocery store right down the street from Ericka House. It is convenient and has affordable food. Students are allowed to take the carts back home for their convenience and return them at a later time.

On Campus

- There are not any formalized meal plans or on campus dining provided by the university. There are plenty of options near campus for a bite to eat.

Restaurants

- If you are having an American craving, there are plenty of Americanized franchises to help. KFC and Subway are scattered amongst the area.

MONEY

Using an ATM

- ATMS are readily available around Curtin.
- Students have found that some banks charge a percentage of the amount that you withdraw internationally. Key Bank charges a flat fee when money is withdrawn and this usually proves to be a better option. Talk to your bank about the different options they offer.
- While cash is the only form of payment taken at many places, be smart about the amount that you carry at any given time. Carrying an excessive amount of money makes you more vulnerable in certain situations. The stores that have high price tags will most likely take credit cards.

Establishing a bank account in your host country

- The university is very helpful in this process. Administration walks you through the steps. Ultimately the host country's account can save money by eliminating the international transaction fees from frequently having to withdraw money from an ATM with an American card.



Credit and Bank Cards

- Students in the past have said that they use cash for most transactions. The majority of places do not accept foreign credit card. Even with an Australian account, some places may not accept the card. Try and carry cash at all times for this reason.
- Students are encouraged to write down the customer service numbers on all credit cards and keep the numbers with them in case cards are stolen and cancellation is necessary.

Travelers Checks

- Though travelers' checks may have once been the safest way to manage money while traveling, they may not be the best option. Traveler's checks are only good once converted. Therefore, if a student plans to use traveler's checks, it is recommended that this be only part of the whole money management scheme.

Other

- Past students have recommended having backup solutions to problems you might face in advance. For example losing your credit card. Come up with a backup plan to what you would do if this were to happen because it takes a while to get a new credit card to be sent overseas. (i.e.: have a second credit card stored in a different place, pay for the entire group dinner when going out and then have everyone pay back in cash, etc.) (2013)
- Past students have recommended making a rough budget for your expenses abroad to avoid missing out in activities at the end of the semester. For example, one student limited her expenses to \$2000 a month while abroad. (2013)

For more information about using credit cards and ATMs abroad and the related fees, visit http://www.flyerguide.com/wiki/index.php/Credit/Debit/ATM_Cards_and_Foreign_Exchange

PHONE AND INTERNET

Using a phone from home

- If planning to use a phone from home, do homework with respect to the cost. In the past students have realized that using devices such as Blackberries with international capabilities can be much more expensive than planned.
- An international SIM card will be necessary, and can be purchased at a phone outlet upon arriving. This has proven to be the best option for students. Blackberry users have to pay a fee to have the phone 'unlocked,' but most others do not. iPhones do not have compatible SIM card options. Do not expect to be able to use an iPhone abroad.
- Some phone providers have international calling to emergency numbers only, or they charge you an insane fee when used. Some students have suggested bringing your phone from home if you have this option; it gives a sense of security when first arriving at the airport.

International Communication

- When calling home, Skype video use is free with wifi access! This is a great option for keeping in touch with friends and family from home as well as those met while traveling.
 - Help parents and friends set up and learn how to use Skype before traveling.
 - Purchasing Skype credit allows students to call a landline or a cell phone back home at two cents per minute. When internet is available this can reduce the hassle involved with international calling cards. Users can also pay \$6-\$10 for a month of unlimited calls to any landline or cell phone in the U.S. from their computers.
- G-chat is also a favorite channel of communication for students. It has a G-Video option as well. It can be more convenient than Skype because it is more user-friendly. Which mode of communication you choose ultimately depends on your preferences. It is recommended to explore both programs before departure so you can inform family members which you will be using.
- If you want friends to be able to call you, leave voicemails, or leave text messages like a regular cell phone, you can sign up for Google voice. You will need to use a VPN (virtual private network) but students have said that it is well worth it. With Google voice, you receive a US telephone number that works like a landline. If you have to make business calls while abroad, this can be a great tool! For more information go to: <http://www.google.com/googlevoice/about.html>.



Internet

- There are several options to accessing the internet while in Australia. It is up to you to find the one that will work best for your situation. All of the options base their rate on the amount of gigabytes used while online. This is something that most American students are not accustomed to. You may have to go a couple months without blindly surfing the net if you are trying to save money!
- The university supplies internet through a landline. This works only in your room and the computer must be connected to the wall at all times.
- There are also internet sticks that are easily purchasable at electronic stores. Students buy a designated amount of credit on the stick; beware, they charge by gig and increase the fee if you go over the amount.
- There are also internet cafes available throughout the area. Students can pay around \$2.00 for 15 minutes, however if you exceed the amount of gigs provided they increase the charge.

SAFETY TIPS

- Be aware of all surroundings and keep your items close to you at all times. If staying in hostels, it is advised to bring a lock to protect your valuables. Avoid bringing anything of extreme sentimental value.
- Keep emergency numbers specific to your country with you at all times.
- The university has a large policing system on campus. Off campus can be less safe, take this into consideration with living accommodations, when exploring, and when experiencing nightlife.



TRAVEL

Arrival

- The university does not provide any formal transportation pick up when arriving to the airport. It will most likely be convenient for you to take a taxi especially if you are splitting the cost with others. Print out a map and know where you need to go before you leave the states. This will eliminate any confusion after landing.
- In the past the university has tried to offer some support to exchange students upon landing, but new guidelines have made the process unclear for students. With any specific questions, contact the university.
- Many students over pack. Appliances such as straighteners, hair dryers, electric shavers, etc can be bought in Australia; as well as toiletries, bedding, and many other bulky items. This will save room in your bag as well as solve any wattage conversion problems you will encounter.

Public Transportation

- Australia is not known for their public transportation systems, so do not rely on it when making any substantial or important plans.
- A 'Transperth,' pass is the key to public transportation. It looks like a credit card and you can use in on the train systems and bus systems. Students can periodically add money to their card but be careful, do not put too much money at one time- students say they are easily misplaced!
- Taxi's are not as reliable as they are in Columbus. Students can call for one but they give you a broad timeframe and do not call when they arrive. Keep an eye out if you are expecting a ride, or you may miss it.
- Believe it or not, some students have purchased a car for transportation. Some students have found it a great option to purchase a car once in the country. Depending on how many exchange students you are traveling with, this may be very cheap and practical. It is possible to find a car for around \$1000 and when split five or six ways it

can be a smarter option for your traveling needs.

- o You can obtain an international driver's license from triple A for a small fee.
- o Parking has not been a problem with the student's car. There is plenty of parking, on and off campus.
- o If you chose to drive, be aware of the different driving rules (they drive on the opposite side of the road.) Also, you are assuming all of the responsibilities if accidents may arise. OSU will not act as a legal guardian for you in these incidents.
- Bikes are another option. They are a common form of transportation. Ask locals about the best places to get one or check out: www.thegumtree.com.au , which is similar to an Australian version of craigslist.

International Travel

- Students in the past have traveled a great deal more than originally expected. Keep this in mind when budgeting and packing. Many students over pack. Appliances such as straighteners, hair dryers, electric shavers, etc can be bought in country; as well as toiletries, bedding, and many other bulky items. This will save room in your bag as well as solve any wattage conversion problems you will encounter.
- For the flight over to your destination and back, utilize StudentUniverse.com. Students have had great luck with affordable prices.
- With affordability comes the possibility of delays and cancellations with these airlines. They will rebook you, and it may take time. Take situations in stride.
- If possible print out any boarding passes prior to arriving at the airport or you may have to pay an additional fee. Also, double and triple check your bag measurements. These airlines are very adamant on their luggage regulations and will impose hefty fees for any passengers that bags do not apply.
- Buy plane tickets and make travel arrangements as least a week in advance if you want a cheaper price.

UNIVERSITY TIPS

Courses

- The faculty at Curtin can be very diverse. Past students have said that their teachers were all from different countries, so their methods of instruction varied greatly.
- Australian Studies 294 is recommended by past students. It is a thought provoking course, with a lot of writing but minimal exams.
- Curtin has a three class minimum, and the minimum is recommended. Students have found that (as with any abroad experience) their exchange is just as much about the travel experiences as it is about the actual study.
- The administration is always willing to help. When scheduling, if you have any questions contact the international office. If you have any questions about specific classes it is recommended that you contact the direct department



rather than professors.

- Australians are prompt. The professors expect the students to be on time as well. However, the professors are laid back and understand if any situations may arise.
- The campus layout is a lot different than OSU. It has less buildings and students, but it is a lot more spread out. It is even more pivotal to give yourself ample time to find a class building before the first day of classes.
- The courses are designed for an ideal travel schedule! Students have three weeks of classes, a weeklong break, three weeks of classes, another week break, three more weeks of classes, a two week break, and then finals. There is plenty of time allotted to visit other parts of Australia and nearby Asia.

Sports

- The Uni Games are highly recommended to watch and there is even a chance to participate! Every university in Australia has their own sports teams and past OSU students have played on these teams. The teams are not as competitive as OSU and it is not very difficult to make the teams. Additionally, you get to return and tell everyone you played on an Australian sports team! Note that a payment/fee is required.
- Footie is the Australians version of football. It is similar to rugby. The games are a lot of fun, don't miss them! They have two professional teams in Perth.
- Intramural sports are also an option. Past students have played and really enjoyed themselves. All sporting opportunities are a great way to meet people and test your abilities. They have fees that are due on a weekly basis.



Resources

- Paying for membership to the student guild has received mixed reviews. It is similar to OSU's union activities and offerings. A student pays about \$80 at the beginning of the year and receives discounts during the rest of their stay. For some students, the discounts have added up quickly and are worth the \$80. For others they did not use it enough for it to be worth the initial payment.
- Past students have worked for the university during their exchange. Your visa allows for up to 20 hours a week of work. The minimum wage is almost double that of the United States so it may be worth looking into. Apply as soon as possible because coveted, on campus jobs go quickly.
- The university has a great website with great information: <http://international.curtin.edu.au/>

MISCELLANEOUS TIPS

Shopping

- Taxes can be high, take advantage of any duty free shops while still in the airport.
- Margaret River is known for its beautiful wineries, surf spots, and boutique shops. This is a favorite spot of exchange students.
- Everything is closed on Sundays. If you are arriving on Saturday keep this in mind if you are planning on making essential purchases.
- Girls are recommended to bring their own makeup as it is a lot more expensive once there.
- "Regular" (stick) deodorant is impossible to find. If you hate spray deodorant, you may want to bring your own from home.

Nightlife

- Going out can be expensive. Budget accordingly and monitor your expenses.
- When going out, be aware of any dress codes that may be enforced. Dress is much more formal than on OSU campus or even downtown Columbus. Certain clubs or restaurants may not permit you to enter if you are not dressed accordingly.
- Students advise taking the train downtown and a cab home. The train stops running at 10 pm.

Tidbits

- The weather is beautiful, it starts to warm up in October. What we may think is perfect temperature they consider cold. When past students have not worn jackets on 70 ° F weather days, Australians have looked at them strangely! Enjoy it, it will be a hard adjustment when you return back to the states.
- Some recommended places to visit during your time in Australia from former students include Esperance and Albany beaches in the South, Margaret River and Swan Valley Wineries, Fremantle markets on the weekend, Bali, Indonesia, Rottnest Island, and Cairns.
- It is advised that you be very open minded and patient when you are on exchange. Not everything is going to go your way while abroad and you will hit major road blocks that you've never encountered before, but its best to just keep an opened mind and don't let things get you down. The times that don't go exactly as planned are going to be the biggest learning experiences. (2013)

If there are further questions or concerns, different resources are available that students can utilize. The Office of Global Business will be a resource throughout the entire trip. Past students have also volunteered to be a contact if additional questions would arise.

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