

Visa & Accommodation

Spending a semester abroad was an interesting experience that came with its own set of challenges and surprises. The process of obtaining my visa was fairly straightforward, though I needed to visit an approved doctor for a required health screening that cost me 300 euros on top of the 1500 euros I had already paid for the visa. The closest approved doctors were located in Zurich and Frankfurt which meant that I had to pay to travel to the health screening appointment. Finding accommodation once I got my visa, turned out to be more difficult than I initially expected. When I saw the prices for university housing, I was taken aback because of how expensive it was (around 6,000 euro for the whole semester). To avoid last-minute stress upon arriving, I contacted private student accommodations in the city around a month before I was supposed to arrive. I fortunately managed to secure a place before leaving Germany and it was markedly cheaper than what the university was offering (around 450 euros a month).

The Environment

Adelaide is known as the festival city of Australia, and I took advantage of the many events happening during my stay. There were festivals to attend, though some of them were pricey on a student budget. There was not a ton of nightlife outside of festival season, though there were a few clubs, however, everything closes by 3 am. The cultural activities that were not festival-related were more affordable, but were definitely more expensive than what they would have been back home. Outside of the city, in the suburbs, there were more opportunities for outdoor activities, giving me a good balance between city life and nature. I would say that on average I spent more time in the suburbs as I felt there were less expensive and more interesting activities there. Getting to said suburbs and around the city was sometimes tricky. The downtown area was walkable and somewhat bikeable, though not quite on Freiburg's standards. Outside of the downtown area, I found a lot of the roads to be dangerous for cyclists. To make transportation more convenient and safe, I purchased a monthly transit pass (35 euros a month) and relied on friends with cars when I wanted to venture further out. The public transportation was usually reliable from 7 am to 11 pm, but outside of those times it was necessary to have a car or get an expensive Uber. Traveling to other places outside of the Adelaide area or to other cities within Australia was somewhat costly, with flights costing at least 300 euros. The limited domestic transportation options also meant that trips across the country required careful planning and often higher expenses.

The Uni

Academically, the experience was quite different from what I was used to. Most courses consisted of recorded online lectures, with optional seminars or tutorials. Since attendance was not mandatory, very few students showed up, and I often found the classes unengaging. I also found it hard to connect with local students because I had a hard time meeting them in classes. The coursework mainly involved busy work, like weekly open-book quizzes that contributed less than 10% to the final grade. Because we didn't see professors often, it was hard to get personalized feedback or guidance. The university was also in the middle of a merger at the time, which made administrative processes somewhat chaotic and difficult to navigate. On the social side, the university had a lot of student-led activities and concerts one could attend,

usually for free or a heavily reduced price meaning that I got to see different areas of the city I would not have seen before. However, while the university did provide a lot of extracurricular enrichment, I found that a lot of foundational things (eg having a Mensa) were missing.

However Overall, my semester abroad was a mix of new experiences and challenges. It taught me a lot about independence and adapting to unfamiliar environments, and I believe it was an important part of my personal and educational growth.

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