

# Travel Report Study Abroad 2016

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One semester abroad at the University  
of Melbourne during the Master 2  
Architecture track

***The last couple of months I have studied at the University of Melbourne and it was one of the best decisions I have ever made so far.***

## **1 Preparations and contacts with your faculty**

I am an Architecture master student and I decided to do the 2nd semester abroad. After the bachelors I felt that my study went by so fast and that I was stuck in a sort of tunnel vision where you go to the same place for years and keep learning things without being really conscious about everything. I wanted to break out of this. That's why I chose to do something really different for one semester. I took a distance from Delft to gain new perspectives on architecture but also on the way of teaching in general and to broaden my horizon.

I thought Melbourne was a really great opportunity to gain those new perspectives because this university has a whole different atmosphere. The university is a big campus like in America and all studies are more converted into each other, instead of all disciplines being isolated like we have more or less with our Architecture faculty. This is what I thought was really relieving: get to know people from other studies that are in a way connected to architecture as well as their knowledge. Also, going to Australia was a great opportunity to broaden my horizon because it gave me the extra change to travel around as a backpacker during and after the semester.

To get accepted by the guest university, it started with applying in Delft by handing in a motivation letter, portfolio and some paperwork. When I got accepted (which I knew very soon after that) the application at the University of Melbourne started. International Office arranged the start of this, and as soon as I applied online (where you get information about from International Office as well) I got contacted by Kate Witham, who is in charge of the Study Abroad students from Europe. She helped further in the process and everything spoke for itself really. The deadline for the acceptance form I received from her was by 8 December, so it was around mid-December that everything was official, while the application deadline in Delft was the 1<sup>st</sup> of June. Even though the process took more than half a year, it was totally worth it!

## **2 Study programme**

The Master 2 Architecture track exists of electives and an architecture studio, so I was quite free to follow subjects I thought were interesting. I followed two electives: 'Environmental Systems' and 'Measured Drawings and Digital Heritage', and an architecture studio: 'Architecture as Memory'.

Before I went abroad, I had to fill in a form with the subjects I wanted to take here. You can find the subjects on the website of the university in the Handbook. However, the system here is very different from Delft. You can switch subjects even in the first week of the semester! Lucky me, because when I got in Melbourne I changed my mind and I could still change the subjects I wanted to take. Also, if you apply for an architecture studio before you travel to Melbourne, you have to wait until the week before the semester officially starts until you can choose between the different studio's they provide. So, if it comes to choosing subjects: don't worry, just attend the compulsory meetings you'll be informed about and everything will be fine!

The subjects I've followed were enormously interesting. I can absolutely recommend following a studio here to see how they give their Design projects here compared to Delft. Also, the Environmental Systems subject was really interesting. I think everybody studying Architecture should have the knowledge that you gain there. You learn everything about designing pleasant spaces taking sustainability into account. Because they accept students from different disciplines, I got lectures about the human body (how does a space affect mood and health), biomimicry, HVAC systems, solar panels... basically everything you have to know. The assignments were not harder here but I think I've learned more in one subject than I normally do in Delft.

Unfortunately however, it wasn't really clear for me that it actually matters that you have done an MSc1 Design Project in the first semester in Delft and you can only convert the design studio you followed abroad into an MSc2 Design Project. Even though it sounds logic I thought it didn't really matter, so in the first semester I did all compulsory master subjects (such as the thesis and lectures) and an MSc2 studio. Thus I sadly didn't get any study points for the architecture studio I followed here and therefore I have to do an extra semester in Delft to do an MSc1 Design project. So, please be aware of this!

### 3 Financial

In contrast to what other people say: in my experience, Australia doesn't have to be really expensive. As it applies to everything: it depends on yourself! Even rent was, in my case, only slightly more expensive than people are used to in Delft. My expenses can be found in the scheme underneath. Note: this does NOT include all my travels I did during and after the semester! It shows what you need to do your semester abroad, if you decide to stay in Melbourne the whole time.

<b>Expenditure</b>		<b>Income</b>	
Tuition fees (TU Delft)	€ 975	Family gifts	€ 3500
Insurance (OSHC)	€ 220	Savings	€ 3000
Visa	€ 375	STIR fund	€ 400
International travel expenses	€ 1400	Sublet room when I travelled**	€ 300
Accommodation (4 x €450)	€ 1800		
+ first week's hostel	€ 150		
Bills (water, electricity, internet)	€ 250		
Food	€ 930		
Study materials	€ 300		
Public transport	€ 100		
Phone (all sim-cards)*	€ 40		
Clothes	€ 260		
Other expenses	€ 400		
<b>Total</b>	<b>€7200,-</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>€7200,-</b>

\* Every month I bought a new 'starter pack' for my phone, because there was always one on sale and you could also easily transfer your current number. I got sim cards from Telstra, Optus and Amaysim. I even made money out of the Telstra sims: the starter packs were on

sale for \$10, and you got \$30 Google Play credits for free with it which you could convert into \$16,50 to a PayPal account. This is a really nice way to save money.

\*\* Because I lived in private bedroom which I rented myself, I could easily sublet this room when I travelled around for a longer period of time. I travelled 2x one week, so in those weeks I sublet my room for \$225 per week (including bills).

## 4 Accommodation

As I said, my rent was really low compared to what people normally pay here. It can be around \$250 per week (\$1000 per month) easily, which is around €700 euro per month. This is however most of the time when you live in one of the colleges (which is even more expensive than €700) or if you live at an UniLodge complex for example. I didn't want that because it was very expensive for what you get.

When I got here, I lived in a hostel for the first week. I searched for a place to stay during that time on Flatmates or Gumtree. It was really hard in the beginning: I knew no one here, the hostel was too big to get in touch with people easily and I couldn't find a place to stay easily either. In the end however, everything was worth it. I found a place in Carlton North together with an Indian guy and a Dutch guy via Gumtree, only 7 minutes away from uni by bike. I had my own bedroom and paid \$170 per week. The place was so cheap because we lived in a 2-bedroom apartment with the three of us. The guy who lived in the living room paid even less.

## 5 Language and Culture

The national language of Australia is, of course, English and is thus also the language that they speak at the University. All my classes and lectures were in English but that wasn't a problem. If you're a master student and already did a semester in Delft, you don't need to do a language test.

I think the culture in Melbourne is very western and I didn't really see shocking differences with our culture. Australian people are generally spoken really friendly. 'How are ya, love?' is a common greeting. They also have quite a few funny abbreviations for certain words. Look at this video to understand what I mean: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDb\\_WsAt\\_Z0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDb_WsAt_Z0).

## 6 Free time

Making friends is very easy if you participate in the 'Melbourne Welcome Program'. All study abroad students from all over the world come together here to get to know people where you can spend most of your time abroad with. It were mostly Americans though, but also a number of people from Europe.

The girls I met at the Melbourne Welcome Program and spend most of my time with didn't study Architecture and came from America, Japan and Denmark. The girls from America however seemed to be more interested in other Americans when they got to know them during the semester, so this might be a cultural thing you should be aware of when meeting

Americans. This also applies to the Japanese girl that started to hang out more with Japanese people during the semester. Luckily the Danish girl, Sarah, always stayed by my side and we became really good friends. Also I met a Dutch girl, Jill, who was here on a Working Holiday Visa. I introduced Jill to Sarah and together we spend most of our time here.

Even though me and the girls from the Melbourne Welcome Program didn't hang out that much as a group, we sometimes met to have dinner or lunch. With Sarah and Jill I hang out more: we partied, grabbed food, went to the cinema and did the most amazing travels. Mostly with Sarah, because Jill wanted to save up to travel on. I went to Tasmania, Perth, the Outback (Alice Springs and Uluru), Sydney and around Victoria (Great Ocean Road, Grampians and Peninsula Hot Springs) during the semester.

By the time I'm writing this, I just finished my semester here, so my 2,5 month travel after the semester is just about to begin. I'm going to travel around New-Zealand for one month by myself. Then I'll fly back to Melbourne, meet my boyfriend there and we will travel along the east coast of Australia and then go to Bali and Thailand.

If you want to travel as much as I did, and do activities too, take into account an extra €7000,-.

## 7 Travel

The journey from Amsterdam to Melbourne was pretty exciting. I did it all by myself, but it was a great journey and I could sleep most of the time. Also, you get free airport pickup from the University of Melbourne, which is really handy, especially when you arrive late in the evening or at night.

Travelling inside Melbourne is really easy. The trams go almost everywhere and if not, there are busses as well. Trains are also really convenient and go further outside the city as well. Just use the app "PTV", which is similar to our "9292".

To travel by public transport you need a Myki card, which is more or less the same system as our OV-Chipcard. Because I'm a masters student, I couldn't get a concession card which gives you 50% discount on your daily fare. Because it is quite expensive without the concession (max. 2x \$3.90 per day) I didn't check in the tram sometimes. Not recommended: I got caught and got a fine: \$75 if you pay on the spot and \$325 if you don't. I bought a bike here, so I barely travelled by public transport, but they still check quite often.

## 8 Miscellaneous

If you want to work here after you finish your studies in Delft, I think there might be a change for you, because our university has a good reputation here. I'm not really sure about the permanent visa you need though, because I heard that you have to get sponsored by your company. But nothing is impossible so if you can start with a Working Holiday Visa and if you prove yourself to be worth it, your company will probably pay for your visa!

## 9 Visa application

The application for the visa goes together with the application at the University. You'll be informed by e-mail of what you have to arrange before you can travel here. I had to apply for the Non Award Sector visa (subclass 575). The visa application was done online at [www.border.gov.au](http://www.border.gov.au) and was quite easy.

Even though I had quite a hard time in the first week, when I didn't know anyone and couldn't find a place very easily, with a lot of "Why Did I Wanted This So Badly Again?"-moments, I'm now really glad I pushed through. It was an experience I've never wanted to miss. I gained knowledge, new perspectives, friends, became totally independent and I've seen more beautiful nature this semester than in the rest of my entire life!

If you have more questions, I'm more than pleased to answer them so don't hesitate to contact me on [daniquevandesanden@hotmail.com](mailto:daniquevandesanden@hotmail.com)!