REPORT AL RIENTRO DELL'ESPERIENZA DI SCAMBIO - 2017-2018

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Testo

Arrival

Going to Australia as a student requires some paperwork. However, getting a student visa as a Spanish citizen is quite easy and the university will provide you with most of the documents you need to hand in. The only inconvenience I faced is that I had to take an IELTS exam just to apply for the visa since they did not accept other official English certificates that I already had. My recommendation is to check every requirement in advance so that you can apply to the visa as soon as you receive the Confirmation of Enrolment from your host institution. Once you get the visa you can book the flight and get ready for the adventure!

Getting used to Sydney during the first days was pretty easy for me. The city is welcoming and it is really easy to move around. I had to go to the city centre by myself because UNSW only provides airport pick-up services for certain neighbourhoods close to the main campus. However, getting from the airport to the city is easy and not expensive.

It is convenient to get a local SIM card on the first day so that you can use 3G to move around, look for accommodation and have a local phone number to start contacting people.

Accommodation

I would recommend to book a hostel or other sort of temporary accommodation to find an apartment once you are there (unless you have chosen to take the university accommodation). If you will study at COFA campus located in Paddington, I encourage you to live in that neighbourhood, Surry Hills or Darlinghurst instead of taking the campus accommodation (located in the main campus in Kensington). Those are very nice neighbourhoods for designers since it is full of shops, bars, art galleries and they are close to the CBD and Bondi Junction while still qthey are still enough quiet. Nevertheless, they are expensive and finding a good room can be hard.

Generally speaking, finding a room in Sydney can be very stressful since it is very hard to find something in good (sanitary) conditions which is not extremely expensive. You can find some good deals in Facebook groups as well as in webs like gumtree.com.au and flatmates.com.au. You should always check the rooms yourself before booking because photos can be tricky and rooms can be very dirty, dark and tiny in real life (like anywhere else, but in Sydney the rooms' status can

be a lot worse than in Europe). However, when you find your place you will feel like the search was worth it!
There is no heating in most of the apartments in the city but you can buy a cheap heater and that should be enough to heat up a room since it doesn't get as cold in the winter.

Education

The system at UNSW is completely different from the one at Polimi. You will have more individual tasks than group work, but you will get both types of assignments. Every course consists of three assignments that will be graded individually. Tutors are very supportive and they are willing to understand your point of view of the projects. The main difference among Polimi and UNSW is that in the Australian university, they focus a lot on the process and they ask you to complete a "visual diary" you will need to hand in at the end of the project. The visual diary is a compilation of the process of your work and they usually encourage you to do it by hand (even though you can always attach some digital printed content). The facilities at COFA campus are really good due to the high university fees. You will have Mac computers, Arduino kits, 3D printers and laser-cut facilities to use anytime.
The courses I took were: Introduction to Graphics Media (very basic graphic design), Critical Approaches to Design Practice (shelter design), Domestic Futures (quite interesting since they give you a lot of free room to fantasize and create some original projects) and Interaction Design (where you learn to program in Max and design interactive systems). My favourite course was Interaction Design since I gained useful theoretical knowledge while I built two interactive systems connecting Max, Arduino and physical prototypes. In my opinion, UNSW is not the best fit for PSSD students since they teach some sort of "general design" which is not very specific and might differ too much with our interests. However, if you are from PSSD, you will still learn something new and get to practise your skills.

Lifestyle

Sydney is a very diverse, vibrant and safe city. It has a stunning coastline filled with amazing surfing beaches, beachwalks, cliffs and natural pools which are really close to the city centre. The vibe is quite chilled and nice even though people work really hard there. You won't find as many art and design exhibitions as in Milan but you can always find interesting galleries, small events and cool places to discover.
Living in Sydney is very expensive with the rent as the biggest cost to afford. Eating and drinking at bars and restaurant is expensive in Australia but it is affordable to do it sometimes. However, you can always enjoy yourself with little money by using the public BBQs at the beach and visiting beautiful nature spots which are close to Sydney. For travelling around Australia, you can always fly to a main city and rent a car there to do a road trip. I would recommend you to go to as many places as possible (Melbourne, the Great Ocean Road and the East Coast are some of the places I have visited and I can tell they are really worth it).
Transport is also expensive since we don't get the student discount because we are exchange students. However, moving around by bike is quite convenient and easy (even it can get hilly at some points).
To face the high living expenses, the student visa will allow you to work part-time. If you are willing to do so, it is easy to find a job in Sydney and they salaries are really high. For example, I have been working casual as a shop assistant for big shopping centres so that I could support my trips and leisure activities. Working casual you don't get fixed shifts but it is easy to coordinate

work with your studies since your working timetable will be completely flexible. However, finding a job as a designer at a studio can be really hard since they usually are not interested in hiring people who can only work part-time.

To conclude, I strongly recommend doing the exchange in Australia. Living in Australia I have met very interesting people, travelled freely, learnt new skills and improved my English while studying design. If you are willing to immerse yourself in a different (and really good) lifestyle that will push you to learn and discover something new, this is the place to go!

Autorizzo al trattamento dei miei dati personali ai sensi del Decreto Legislativo n. 196/03 da parte del Politecnico di Milano.

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