

## From having Fears to being Fearless - Study abroad edition

Considering an exchange, but also considering everything that could go wrong?

Settled into university, and worried you won't be happier abroad?

Afraid anxiety will heighten, so don't want to leave your comfort zone?

Those were HUGE fears of mine, but now I'm happily halfway across the world in Aussie!

So fear not fellow-worriers, as I'm LIVING PROOF that there are wayyy more pros than cons!

### 1. MENTAL HEALTH – Don't let it hold you back...

Struggling with mental health isn't easy, but don't let it stop you from following your dreams! I struggle with anxiety and worried about not having support...but I realised how much exchanges can actually improve mental health—confidence; independence; and the sun can improve anxiety!

WORDS\_OF\_WISDOM:

- Check out the mental health services offered by your host university – for example, mine offers free counselling: <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/current-students/support/personal/counselling>
- Attend orientation events! It's a super-easy time to build a strong network of friends :)
- Make a bucket-list!! Having adventures to look forward to will help you focus on positives rather than irrational thoughts. Here's one for Newcastle:

<https://www.coastxp.com/top-10-things-to-do-in-newcastle-nsw/>

### 2. CULTURE SHOCK – perspective is key...

I had the misconception that Australia is a warmer version of England, so wasn't prepared for culture shock! Waking up to unfamiliar bird noises, encountering possums and confusing slang were all part of it. Oh, and the Eagle Rock tradition (trust me, you don't want to know...).

WORDS\_OF\_WISDOM:

- Keep an open mind! Instead of being judgemental, accept the differences - try pretending you're making a documentary about a curious new environment!
- ASK QUESTIONS – the best way to learn about the culture is by asking the locals!
- Watch videos about the culture! Here's a YouTube video on Aussie slang:  
[https://youtu.be/yDb\\_WsAt\\_Z0](https://youtu.be/yDb_WsAt_Z0)

More culture shock tips: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/living-abroad/culture-shock>

### 3. PACKING 1 YEAR INTO 1 SUITCASE – Beware of under packing...

Having spent my entire overdraft on a one-way ticket to Australia, you can probably guess I was BROKE. So naturally, being charged for extra luggage was not on my agenda! I convinced myself to pack lightly as I naively presumed 'it's cheaper to buy stuff there'. BOY, WAS I WRONG! Not only was everything more expensive, but I also didn't have the faintest idea of where the shops were, or which shops I needed to find; to my utter disbelief Boots is a non-existent-store in Australia [insert broken-heart emoji]

WORDS\_OF\_WISDOM:

- Only pack what you can carry! Write a list of essentials that you'll need to buy within the first week: <https://www.internationalcitizens.com/moving-abroad/ultimate-packing-list.php>
- Look up which supermarkets are near to your accommodation in preparation!
- Don't underestimate jetlag!! Shopping is tiring work - order essentials online to your accommodation before arriving (bedding!)