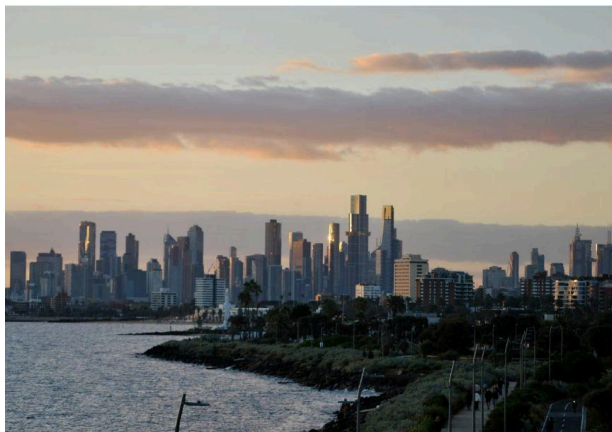


Study Abroad Report

The University of Melbourne
February to June 2024 (Semester 1)
Bachelor of Mathematics (4th Semester)



I. Preparation

Application for the Exchange Program:

My preparation for the exchange semester began several months before the application deadline in mid-June. The application required various documents: a written resume, a motivation letter, an official transcript, two recommendation letters, and an English proficiency test. I recommend starting early, especially with the recommendation letters and English test, as these may take more time to organize.

About a month after the application deadline, I was invited to an interview with the exchange program committee, which was conducted in English. The interview covered my motivations for studying abroad and my financial plans for the exchange. Two weeks later, I received my nomination for the exchange at the University of Melbourne. During the summer break, I applied for the "Baden-Württemberg Stipendium," as suggested by the exchange coordinator. This scholarship provides financial support and opportunities to connect with other students through various activities.

Organization of the Exchange Semester:

In November, I began organizing my exchange semester, starting with the official application at the University of Melbourne. During this process, you can check the prerequisites for courses you want to take. Then, I looked into visa options and Overseas Student Health Care (OSHC). I chose Bupa for my health insurance, but other options are available. I completed my student visa application after receiving my enrollment certificate from the University of Melbourne in late December.

I also started looking into accommodations and flights. Flights to Australia are expensive, so it's important to budget accordingly. For accommodation, there are several options: student housing (which needs to be arranged early), private shared accommodation, homestay, etc. I opted for a shared apartment, which was more affordable but challenging to find (see tips below).

During the semester before my departure, I met with other outgoing exchange students and current exchange students from Melbourne who were studying in Heidelberg. These meetings

were highly beneficial as we shared advice on organizing insurance, visas, and other administrative tasks.

II. Studying

Choosing and Planning the Subjects:

Studying at the University of Melbourne allowed me to take courses both within and outside my field of study, which were not available at my home university. The full range of courses is listed in the University of Melbourne's course handbook.

Students can choose between three or four courses per semester, provided they meet prerequisites. While the course selection process takes place a few weeks before the semester begins, you can adjust your courses during the first two weeks. A helpful tip: choose your tutorials early, as they fill up quickly. If you encounter any issues, "Stop 1" (the university's student services) is an excellent resource.

I took two courses in Mathematics, my major—one undergraduate course and one graduate course. Note that if you are an undergraduate, you are only allowed to take one graduate-level course per semester. My third course was in Economics, my minor, and my final course was in Development Theory (from the sociology and politics faculty), which counted toward my interdisciplinary competencies (FÜK) in Heidelberg. Taking courses outside of your main field is a great way to meet new people and learn something different. Other exchange students took fascinating courses like Aboriginal History and Culture, Street Art, Film, and even Beer Tasting.

Course Structure:

While the course structures varied, I found them to be more interactive than I was used to in Heidelberg. Tutorials especially involved a lot of student participation and discussion. Most courses had three to four assignments throughout the semester that contributed to the final grade, but passing the final exam is still essential. Lectures lasted 55 minutes and were available live and as replays online. Tutorials may be compulsory, depending on the faculty. Most professors also offer office hours, where students can ask questions about lectures, exercises, and assignments or seek general guidance.

Here's a breakdown of my courses:

- **Complex Analysis:** This undergraduate course had three lectures and a two-hour tutorial per week, where we worked on group exercises. The four assignments during the semester made up 20% of my final grade.
- **Algebraic Number Theory:** As a graduate-level course, it had three lectures per week and no tutorials. We submitted three assignments, which contributed 30% of the final grade.
- **Introductory Macroeconomics:** This course included two lectures and one tutorial per week. Attendance in tutorials was strongly encouraged, as we worked on group exercises. We also completed one group presentation and two group assignments, which accounted for 50% of the final grade.
- **The Developing World:** In addition to the two-hour lecture, there was a mandatory one-hour tutorial each week, where we discussed lecture materials and debated key issues. This course had no final exam but included one presentation, two assignments, and two essays.

Life Around Campus:

The Friday before the semester began was International Student Welcome Day, a mandatory event where I met fellow exchange students. Most of my international friends came from this event, so I would strongly encourage you to participate. The following week was O-Week (Orientation Week), featuring activities for new students, including campus tours, presentations on various university-related themes (how to study at university, Australian English, how to write essays, etc.), and introductions to sports clubs and social societies. O-Week is not mandatory and is more useful for first-year students than exchange students, but it can still be a great way to familiarize yourself with the university.

The Parkville campus, where my courses were held, was a very comfortable place to study. There are numerous cafes, libraries, and open spaces. However, unlike Heidelberg, there is no central cafeteria—only restaurants or snacks without student pricing.

The University is home to many student clubs and societies, both sports and social (presented during O-Week), which host meetups on and off-campus. This is also where you can often find free food or coffee!

The gym membership at the university was reasonably priced at about \$15 per week, and it included access to the gym, group fitness classes, and the campus swimming pool. As a student, you can access the pool for free during specific hours each day.

III. Stay in Melbourne:

Life in Melbourne:

Living in Melbourne was one of the best parts of my exchange. The city is vibrant and full of parks, cafes, bars, restaurants, music, street art, and festivals, giving it a lively, "European" vibe. Melbourne also felt incredibly safe, which made settling in easy.

There are a lot of neighborhoods to explore, each with its unique atmosphere. Brunswick and Fitzroy are beloved by young people for their laid-back vibe, with cafes, op-shops (thrift stores), bars, and small restaurants. In Carlton, Lygon Street is known for its fantastic Italian cuisine, and in the CBD, you can find many great Asian food options.

Living Costs and Accommodation:

The cost of living in Australia is quite high. Rent, food, and other essentials can be expensive. For accommodation, there are several options: university student housing, private student housing, or finding private accommodation (shared flats, houses, homestays, etc.). Searching for private accommodation can be more challenging but is generally more affordable.

University accommodation costs between \$430 and \$700 per week, and it's close to campus with excellent facilities such as study rooms, common rooms, and gyms. Private student accommodations start at around \$350 per week and also offer social activities, making it easy to meet people. Keep in mind that applications for these accommodations must be made in advance.

I opted for a private shared apartment, which is usually more affordable but also more challenging to secure. I found a two-person shared flat, about a 30-minute walk from campus, for \$300 per week. Growing up, I dreamed of going to Hogwarts just like Harry Potter; little did I know that moving to Melbourne would (almost) fulfill that dream. While the University

of Melbourne is no Hogawarts, I did live just like Harry in what some might call a cabinet - my 4-square-meter bedroom had no window!

If you plan on going the private route, I recommend starting your search 2-3 months before your departure. As the University of Melbourne is located near the city center, a reasonable rent for a shared place ranges between \$250 and \$350 per week, depending on the neighborhood. Some friends waited until they arrived in Melbourne to find accommodation, staying in hostels for about a month before securing a place. While this is possible, it's stressful—especially at the beginning of your exchange—so I would advise against it.

Transportation:

Public transport in Melbourne is well-developed but relatively expensive. Fortunately, as an exchange student, you are eligible for a 50% discount on the concession card. I found that getting a second-hand bike was a great investment, as it offered flexibility and saved both money and time on transportation. You can also resell the bike at the end of your stay.

Budget Plan for 5 Months in Melbourne:

Expenses	AUD	EUR
Flights (round trip)	2,250 - 3,250 AUD	1,400 - 2,000 EUR
Accommodation (per week)	300 - 500 AUD total 6,600 - 11,000 AUD	190 - 310 EUR 4,090 - 6,810 EUR
Student Visa (price has gone up)	720 AUD now 1,600 AUD	450 EUR 990 EUR
OSHC for 6 months	350 AUD	210 EUR

Food (groceries and eating out)	400 - 500 AUD per month total 2,000 - 2,500 AUD	250 - 310 EUR 1,250 - 1,550 EUR
Other (shopping, entertainment, transport)	970 AUD	600 EUR

Make sure to budget additional funds if you plan to travel during your exchange (see the travel section below).

IV. Tips:

TOEFL Test:

Take a few online practice tests before the TOEFL exam. Keep in mind that, when taking the test in person, you'll be sharing the space with other test-takers. I strongly recommend bringing earplugs—I forgot mine and found it distracting to hear others speaking during the test. Also, if you are taking the exam in Heidelberg, note that the keyboards are QWERTY (English keyboards).

Accommodation:

If you plan on searching for private accommodation, I highly recommend using platforms like Flatmates and Facebook groups such as Fairy Floss Melbourne (where I found my place). Ideally, start your search two to three months in advance, as the rental market in Australia moves quickly, with rent typically paid weekly.

Write a short profile summarizing your preferences (budget, duration of stay, neighborhood), along with some personal details (exchange student, nationality, age, gender, hobbies). Tailor your profile for both roommates and landlords to show you can be a good, social, and respectful tenant.

When searching remotely from Germany, always verify the accommodation through video calls with the landlord or roommates. Scams are a common issue, so avoid making any

payments or deposits until you've confirmed the legitimacy of the listing and feel comfortable with the place.

Paying in AUD:

If you do not need an Australian bank account, Revolut offers good exchange rates with no additional fees of up to 1000 EUR per month. I used Revolut throughout my exchange, and it's also great for traveling to other countries if you plan on doing so.

Traveling Around Melbourne:

Melbourne is well-connected by train for day trips to places like Brighton Beach or the Dandenong Ranges. If you plan on driving, get an International Driver's License before leaving (available at ADAC; it only takes a day and costs about 15 EUR). If you need to hire a car, services like Pop Car (which offers student discounts) and Uber Car Share work well. Here are some suggested day trips if you have access to a car: Yarra Valley, Phillip Island, Wilsons Promontory, or the Great Ocean Road.

Recommendations in Melbourne:

Carlton:

- Good Measure: Cozy coffee shop on Lygon Street
- Cinema Nova: Cinema on Lygon Street; half-priced tickets on Mondays
- Bar Holiday: Bar near Lincoln Square with an affordable happy hour
- Lygon Street: Known for its many excellent Italian restaurants
- Carlton Gardens: Ideal for relaxing or having a picnic, and home to some final exams at the end of the semester!

Fitzroy:

- Fitzroy Market: Vintage market on Rose Street, weekends
- Rooks Return: Bar on Brunswick Street; hosts Wednesday jazz night
- Naked for Satan: Bar and restaurant on Brunswick Street; enjoy a \$4 pizza with any drink (even a soft drink)
- Workers Club: Bar and club on Gertrude Street; Monday is student night with cheap beer and cider

- Brunswick Street & Smith Street: Both popular for their great shops, cafes, and restaurants

CBD:

- Tokui Sushi: Sushi bar on Lonsdale Street, with \$2.50 sushi rolls
- State Library: Great study place; the dome is worth visiting
- Narm Ngarrgu Library: Located on Terry Street; quiet and excellent for studying
- Rooftop Bar: Bar on Swanston Street with a stunning panoramic view of Melbourne
- Fitzroy Gardens: Peaceful park just outside the busy CBD

Traveling Around Australia:

Since you're already on the other side of the world, you might as well take the opportunity to explore beyond Melbourne. Here are a few of my tips and recommendations:

At the end of my semester, I went on a campervan tour in Western Australia with five friends. I highly recommend a campervan tour to explore the more remote areas of the country. Some rental companies to consider include **Apollo**, **Cheapa Campa**, and **Jucy**. You can also check out **Imoova**, which offers low-priced campervan rentals for relocating vehicles from one location to another.

If you plan on traveling the East Coast by bus, several companies offer this service:

- **Greyhound**: The most famous option (and you can get 15% off with UniDays on the passes).
- **Premier Motor Service**: A cheaper option, but it only offers one-way trips.

There may be other companies, so it's worth checking.

I also volunteered at the **Great Barrier Reef** on a diving boat called **Reef Encounter** (you don't need to be a certified diver—you can also snorkel). It was an amazing experience. After booking your first day (and night) as a guest, you can stay for two additional nights as a volunteer. The volunteer work mainly involves doing the dishes in the kitchen and helping with housekeeping, but in return, you get to sleep, eat, and dive (at least twice a day) for free! You can also extend your stay as a volunteer depending on availability—just ask a few days in advance or when you begin.

V. Personal Conclusion:

My time in Melbourne was truly an unforgettable experience, and I can't recommend it enough. Living in a new city and adapting to the relaxed Australian lifestyle helped me grow more independent and confident. During my exchange, I had the opportunity to meet people from all over the world, many of whom became close friends. You'll find that friendships develop quickly in such a new and ever-changing environment.

Although there were challenges, the exchange was absolutely worth it—better than anything I could have imagined. It not only enriched my academic journey but also shaped me personally. I believe that the three key elements of an exchange experience are the city and country you live in, the university you choose, and most importantly, the people you meet along the way.

Melbourne has become a second home to me, and the memories I made there will always hold a special place in my heart. I am incredibly grateful for the experience and would do it all over again without hesitation!