

1. What was your first day in your host country like? What about your first day at the internship site? Did your pre-departure expectations match reality?

Pre-Departure and Getting to Sydney

The time leading up to my arrival in Sydney, Australia was a mixture of emotions. I was feeling nervous, excited but ultimately, scared. Lots of these negative emotions funneled into it being the first time that I would be traveling overseas, let alone it being about 20 total hours traveling with a 15 hour flight from LAX to SYD. The flight I got, however, was overnight, so I mainly slept the entire time and would just stand up every now and then to stretch my legs. I got to Sydney around 6:30 AM, and took an uber to the hostel. I could've set up a scheduled airport pick-up with the internship agency, but it was too pricey and looking back I was able to save almost \$100 had I arranged for a pick-up. Comprehensively, I think things ended up being less terrifying as I had set them out to be

First Day in Sydney

Since I had arrived so early in the morning, my room was not ready until 2 pm. I tried to set up an earlier check-in with the hostel, but they didn't have great communication with me and just said they would try their best. Luckily, I had a friend who was also staying at the same hostel and was able to help me out by giving me the code and a place to leave my stuff until my room was ready. I was greeted in Sydney by beautiful weather and I used the wifi at the hostel to look-up nearby places after freshening up from the flight. Since I am vegan, it is often difficult to find places to eat, so it took me a while before I settled on a coffee shop that was about a 5 minute walk. This would be the first time eating out in public by myself in Australia, but it was really nice to just sit outside of the cafe and people watch. I got some tea and tried soy and linseed bread for the first time. By people watching, I quickly learned that the attire in Sydney is nicer and it is not like the United States where lots of people go out in lounge wear, or even pajamas.

After my breakfast, it was still pretty early in the morning, so I just started walking around. I wanted to find places that I knew I would like such as a local library or a nice grocery store. Back home, these are usually places that oddly bring me some sort of comfort and both were within the area. When I got to the grocery store, I spent about an hour or so looking around and seeing the different types of foods they had compared to the US. It was interesting to see that fresh produce was very very limited and quite expensive. At the time, there was a lettuce shortage due to some floods, so I knew I would have to get creative with the food I would cook here. There were some differences within the grocery store that surprised me. First of all, there were not as many high shelves with tons of food like there are in the US. There was a more limited section. Eggs were left outside fridges and there were interesting/alternative names for common items that I was not familiar with.

Examples:

- *Muesli: Granola*
- *Rocket: Arugula*
- *Long life milk: Milk in a carton*
- *Capsicum: Bellpeppers*

Overall, there were not some of the same grocery items I was used to seeing in America; such as all the vegan options, but I would later look around at other grocery stores to see what I could find. After exploring the grocery store, I located the local library that was also quite close to my accommodation. I spent some time there reading books about things I could do in Sydney and getting an overall glimpse of the literature scene in Australia. It also helped that there was free wifi, so I could figure out how to get back to my accommodation.

Since I arrived on a Friday I had the weekend to get some things together before I started my internship on Monday. Later that day, my room was ready so I was able to unpack and start the process of settling in. I tried to find another place for lunch and found a nearby vegan restaurant. After walking over 20 minutes to get there, it turns out they closed early which caused me to panic as I was really hungry and was unsure where I would get food. I started to make my way back to the accommodation, planning to eat some of the already made meals I got earlier at the grocery store. As I was walking back, I decided to stop and look at menus of different places just to see what was around. I actually happened to find a sushi place that had vegan options – Sushi Hub! It was surprisingly cheap and would become a staple during my time in Sydney. This occurrence really put into perspective how when traveling, things may not always go as planned. We can always have an idea of how we would like things to go, but ultimately, you have to be willing to be flexible and figure things out as you go. I had underestimated myself and my problem solving skills. By taking the time to stop and explore, I overcame one of the first (of many) obstacles I would encounter in Australia. I learned from that that I would be smart enough to persevere in the instance where things wouldn't go as planned. I ended the night hanging out with my friend who had gotten off of work, and watching a movie with some new people I had met at the hostel. Since I had spent the whole day essentially tiring myself out, I was also able to soften the blow of jet lag.

Veterinary Clinic: First Day

My internship site consists of two Veterinary clinics owned by a Veterinarian and her husband. Before arriving, I had not heard anything from the manager in regards to my first day. I had to email them to remind them I was coming and ask what time I should be there, as well as which clinic I should arrive at. Needless to say, I was a little uneasy about it as there were a lot of unknowns. They did end up responding and I had to keep cultural differences in mind. While everything in America is fast-paced and immediate, it is not the same case in other countries. The day before my first day, I took the train to figure out where the clinic was. This was extremely beneficial and helped settle some of the anxieties I had regarding my first day. Since I did this over the weekend, I was also able to take my time as it was not as busy as it would be on a weekday in the morning.

I was able to get to the clinic just fine on my first day, and I even got there a couple minutes early. Already, it appeared to be a busy day and there were two other vet students also shadowing the Veterinarians as part of their clinical rotations. They were both from the University of Melbourne and it was beneficial for me as I was able to ask them questions in regards to their program. Comprehensively, it was a pretty standard day where we got to all watch some consultations, help out with cleaning and talk with the Veterinarian. Towards the end of the day, there weren't any appointments left, so the head veterinarian told us we could go on a long walk around the park across the street from the clinic to explore a bit. I was able to further connect with the vet students and see how easy it was to walk around outdoor areas in Sydney despite being in such a big city.

At the end of the day, I felt a little unsure of my duties around the clinic. I didn't receive any specific training or instructions on my first day. While the vet students were there for my first few days, I was the only intern and the first one in a long time. This further outlined to me the effects of COVID on the flow of life in all aspects; it also reaffirmed that I would have to stay flexible and ask questions as I went along.

2. How did your impressions of the host culture and internship site change over time? What are some of the biggest differences you encountered?

Cross Cultural Observations and Development

At the start of my trip in Sydney, I was able to recognize the diversity that makes up such a wonderful city. I changed my focus from only learning about Australian culture to making it a point to talk to people from all around the world and ask them about their experiences. I found that one of the ways to learn about a culture

without physically going there or reading about it is by talking and asking questions about their life. The countries I was able to learn more about included: The Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Canada, Japan, Thailand, France, Austria, Zimbabwe, Ireland, Singapore, the UK and other parts of the United States. I further made progress on this goal by making the effort to talk to these people and being open minded. Some of the biggest differences I encountered while asking others about their experiences is within the collective versus individualistic mentality, traditional food and values. The United States is very individualistic and tends to over exaggerate meal portions, this was gravely outlined to me as I spoke with others about their experiences.

In terms of Australian culture, I did realize that my internship was a little more “laid back” than I would have expected. I do not have any other Australian experiences that I would be able to compare it to, but I wasn’t really sure where I was supposed to show up (my host site had two locations), or what I was supposed to do once I got there. Being from the US, I am used to the punctuality of having a specific time to show up, tasks to do and set work times. There was a decent amount of room for flexibility. On my first day, I was even sent on a long walk since there was a large amount of free time between consultations. As time went on during my internship, I started to get used to the flexibility and instead of taking advantage of it by not showing up some days, I took it upon myself to self delegate and present myself regardless of there being a lot going on or not. I think this left a good impression on the veterinarians and veterinary staff as they saw my hard work without having to be told what to do at all times. This also allowed me to learn more skills and refine them during my time there. By the halfway mark of my internship, I had started to get a little more comfortable with the staff and would ask more questions or to complete more advanced tasks. By the end of the internship, I was able to share mutual gratitude with everyone at the vet clinic due to my helpfulness. My last day I’d like to think of as my most ideal experience where I was able to help set up for surgeries, partake in anesthetic monitoring, clean the medical instruments used, bathe and dry a puppy. At the end of the day before I left, the veterinarian explained to me the x-rays and ultrasound results taken of a cat that had fallen off a building. It was a bittersweet ending as I got to share such a wonderful time with the others in the clinic. I was also able to reflect upon how far I had come in terms of leaning into the adaptable Aussie lifestyle.

How Cross Cultural Experiences Attributed to my Social Identity

Sydney is an extremely diverse city. Upon arrival, I could tell right away that there was a lot going on, culturally. Due to Sydney's proximity to other countries, I noticed a stronger Asian influence than I was used to in Oregon. This was reflected in Thai and Chinatown areas that were located near the city and several authentic restaurants. As a Latina, I also noticed that there weren’t as many Mexicans, but still a good amount hispanic and Latinx communities. In the US, there are many times I have felt as an outcast especially with the type of stereotypes that surround being Mexican. Certain political climates also made it particularly hard for my identity leaving a deeply scarring experience whilst navigating through life as an American citizen. Despite the fact I wasn’t surrounded by people who looked like me, it was not in the discouraging or intimidating way that I was used to. Instead, I was another piece within the beautiful mosaic that made up Sydney. I wanted to share my culture with others and hear about theirs. In the US, I feel that after years of exploitation and cultural appropriation, I wasn’t as keen on showing off my cultural roots. The communities in Sydney gave me the opportunity to showcase where I came from and have that celebrated. An example of this would be whenever I would go out and would see references to Mexican culture, I would take the time to explain them in Sydney whereas in the US, I wouldn’t really bother with doing that. Being in a new place in general allowed me to embrace elements I would have otherwise overlooked.

On the other hand, it was interesting to hear people's reactions whenever I told them I was from the US since there are some very interesting opinions revolving around the country. Many times, people would bring up politics or scrutinize certain policies such as the lack of gun control, women's reproductive rights or

Trump to me. I would have to choose what topics to engage in, but for the most part it challenged my identity as an American. I had to realize that there would always be certain good and bad aspects of all countries, not just the US. Likewise, I didn't leave Sydney too often, but when I did I noticed that other parts of Australia weren't as diverse as being in the city, but still more so than what I would see in the US.

3. Considering the entire experience, what were the most important benefits of your internship - personally and professionally?

Accepting and Learning from Gratitude

All things considered, the most important benefits of my internship are how much I have learned about myself, both professionally and personally, during this experience. I have been able to expand upon my leadership and technical skills in expansive manners that were beyond my comfort zone. I compare this to how I would work when I first started at the veterinary clinics, where I was unsure of what to do, asking what they needed help with and simply trying to stay out of the way. Now, I've grown more confident with my abilities, I take initiative and do helpful things without having to be told to do them. I am proud of this. I am proud of taking the time and learning to grow, all while maintaining relevant confidence. I have also learned to make the most out of every experience. That by doing things I am scared of, by failing and even by being uncomfortable, I am still learning and expanding as a student, person and overall traveler. It has certainly been challenging. There have been times where I doubted myself, where I have even questioned whether I should be Sydney. My parents have worked so hard, I have worked so hard to get to where I am, and I have had to take a step back to remember this and reflect upon the opportunity I had been granted. I learned how to be compassionate with myself and how to feel deserving of being in a big city where I can do something new everyday. I went from fearing what was next, from questioning every choice I've made and will make, to simply living my life and letting myself feel those emotions in a driven manner. Whether this involved happiness, excitement, grief or sadness, I gave myself the necessary time to feel that way, but also learn to not dwell too much on the negative and move on from it. This has definitely been the most challenging non-work-related aspect of this experience: extracting something considerably advantageous for my future self, even if it did not happen in the way that I would have expected. I am grateful for everything I have been able to encounter and will encounter in the future.

Significant Connections with Myself and Those Around Me

Furthermore, the most rewarding non-work-related aspect of this experience is getting to live in such an amazing city as Sydney. At first I was hesitant, troubled even, that I was not able to go with my original internship abroad first choice. After living there for three months, I had come to fall in love with the harbor, with all the hidden bays and diversity of people, animals and plants. There is always something to do or things going on that make it easy to go out into the day with no real plans, but still end up doing an abundant amount of things, and simply having fun with it. Some of my best memories have been made with people from all over the world that have happened to be in the same place and time. It is so rewarding to hear about their lives back in their home country, and to share entirely new encounters with them. To be a small, but meaningful part of others' lives, and to allow them to be a part of mine. I realize that I will never be able to relive those experiences again. I won't confront the same day with the same sunset, food and friends. I won't be able to laugh on the same train ride or point out monumental places while explaining carefully in English what they mean. This used to make me sad. I used to be hesitant of being willing to share a part of myself with those who might have been a temporary part of who I am, but since then I realized that's the beauty of it. To share such delightful moments with others, that makes leaving and saying goodbye so hard; this is what shows care and mutual friendship. Learning to let others in is also the fascinating part of being able to travel and leave small

pieces of ourselves in different places that get carried around the world. Now I know that somewhere out there, Chiharu, my best friend from Japan, will tell her friends back home how she got to try a PB & J with her friends from the United States. Or how Nephak, my friend from Thailand, will have pictures to share with his family of our visit to the zoo on an extremely windy day. That is both the most rewarding and challenging part of taking the time to connect with others.

4. Describe your daily routine for workdays and weekends

Work Day Daily Routine – Surgeries

While no two days were the same at the vet clinics, surgery and consultation days followed some of the same formats. Below I have listed a general day where I primarily helped out with surgeries:

7:00 am-7:50 am: Wake up and get ready for the day

7:50 am-8:15am: Eat breakfast, review and journal any confusing elements from the cases the day before and pack my lunch/snacks

8:15am -9:00am: Commute to work. Usually involved walking to the train station, taking the train then either a bus or walking to the clinic.

9:00am-10:00am: Get to the clinic. Wash/Dry/Put away any dishes from the day before

10:00am-11:00am: Prepare for surgery by getting together all the supplies, setting up the operation theater and dental machine.

11:00am-2:00pm: Time varied depending on how many and what type of surgeries we had. Generally, I would watched the surgeries being performed and conducted anesthetic monitoring for the patients. Between surgeries, I would clean/sanitize the operation theater, make sure the animal woke up properly from anesthetic and set out all new/clean equipment.

2:00pm-2:30pm: Lunch time

2:30pm-3:00pm: Clean all medical instruments used during the surgeries, as well as any leftover equipment that had not yet gotten wiped down.

3:00pm-6:00pm: Got off of work and would generally take the train to meet up with friends/run errands/go to the beach (if it was a nice day) or simply go for a walk around the bay.

6:00pm-7:30pm: Dinner with friends at the hostel, make my breakfast and lunch for the next day

7:30pm-10:00pm: Watch a movie/hang out/shower or simply go to my room to decompress.

10:00pm-11:00ish: Prepare for bed and go to sleep

For days where we didn't have surgeries, I would essentially do the same things. The only difference would be that from 10:00am-2:00pm, I would watch consultations with the veterinarian, help prepare medications, answer phone calls and set-up appointments. I would be off earlier and would have some more free time to explore the city.

Weekend General Routine

Every weekend's routine depended heavily on the weather conditions. Since I went to Sydney during the winter (and a very wet one at that) there would be some days where we would want to do things outside, but couldn't due to heavy rain. Despite this, I would always find something to do with the friends I had made at the hostel whether it was inside or outside. There were times we would go to nearby national parks, the beach, museums, restaurants and other tourist attractions. I found that it was easy for me to keep a list of all the things I wanted to do in Sydney, then go through it when making plans during the week after work and over

the weekends. I collected things to do from the internet, people I talked to and from walking around/exploring. I really took advantage of this time to decompress after a long week and do some fun things.

5. What steps did you take to make sure that you became an asset to the organization? With whom were you able to develop strong relationships?

Overcoming Challenges and Finding my Place at the Clinic

When I first started my internship, I was not sure what my role at the organization would look like. I had not received any official training or set tasks that I would be expected to complete during my first week. This was a challenge especially since I had been used to always having a specific job within a company. As time went on, I realized that I would work my way up to hold greater responsibilities. I started out with mainly cleaning and observing, then I started answering phone calls. After that, I got to shadow the veterinarians more then started to learn about preparing surgery rooms, how to do anesthetic monitoring and clean medical instruments. A couple weeks went by and I was pretty much trained in everything around the clinic, other than the Veterinarians actual job, of course. I utilized this time to become an asset to the organization by using the skills I had learned to start self delegating and doing things without being explicitly told. I would also show up every single day of the week ready to work no matter the size of the job. This allowed me to build strong relationships with the Veterinary nurses, as I could quickly prepare operation rooms and do all the proper cleaning and setting up for the next ones. They could then focus more on the animal waking up from the anesthetic afterwards. During the surgery, I did the anesthetic monitoring which was essentially making sure the animal was properly asleep during the procedure and that they were dealing with anesthetic as expected. I would record Capillary Refill Rate, SpO₂, Heart Rate, Blood Pressure, whether the jaw was slack when moved and if the eyes would react when opened. This allowed the veterinary nurses to administer any necessary medications and help the veterinarian with any holding or changing of settings on the oxygen machine. I became someone they could rely on as I made it a point of being a quick learner and able to handle the pressure that sometimes came from being in surgery.

Developing and Maintaining Strong Relationships

While I was able to build meaningful relationships with the Veterinary nurses, I also formed significant and meaningful relationships with one of the veterinarians, Dr. K, during my time at the clinic. Dr. K would work shorter hours due to having kids, but she was ultimately the main veterinarian I observed during consultations. I became helpful to her by expeditiously learning what she would need before she would tell me. For example, when expressing anal glands, I would grab a towel, spray and shampoo for her to use afterwards. I also learned the common medications used and would run out and grab these from her after certain consultations while she did other things such as write-ups or creating the prescriptions. We would often talk and joke about certain things that would happen throughout the day. She was extremely helpful and supportive during my time at the clinics. After work, I would research peer-reviewed articles about some of the cases/medications we would encounter, then I would bring these up if we ever had some downtime. This allowed me to make connections with the cases and she also loved to solidify her knowledge and explain these things to me.

Overall, I think it really helped to have a journal where I would record the cases and any procedures done for the day. I found that the more I wrote about certain things, the more common I realized they were. This helped me memorize prominent medications, make connections with past classes I've taken and comprehensively get the most out of my internship.

Advice and Concluding Thoughts

If you're considering going to Sydney, Australia or maybe you are already committed to a program and you're reading this to somewhat prepare yourself/know what to expect, whatever it may be, I do want to stress that everyone will have different experiences. I came to Sydney not having any idea what to expect. I didn't overly prepare all the things I wanted to do. In fact, I wasn't even sure what there was to do. In a way this was extremely beneficial for me as I came to the city with a clean slate and learned to figure it out as I went along. I do think there are certain pieces of advice, however, that everyone should know when getting to Sydney which I have highlighted below:

Financial Considerations

Before my program, I made sure to double check, even triple check to be completely honest, all of my scholarships and financial aid. I made sure to communicate with the financial aid, scholarship office and my advisor to make sure everything was set for when I got to Australia. Once I got my bill, I also made sure all the prices lined up with the final draft provided by IE3. This was helpful so that there would later not be any surprises while I was already abroad. I also saved up lots of money leading up to my trip that I would be able to spend while here since I knew I would not be working. My actual expenses were a little more than I expected. Sydney is a pretty expensive city and I like to do lots of things over the weekend that are genuinely a bit pricier. It would save me a lot of money if I didn't go out to eat over the weekends, or eat so much gelato (it is just so good here), but I wouldn't say I haven't been spending too much more than the budget provided by IE3. My spending here largely depends on the week. Some weeks I have to do laundry, go grocery shopping, refill my opal card and pay rent so my spending is about \$600/week. Other weeks I don't spend too much on groceries or my transportation card had enough money, so my spending can be about \$500/week. Here is a very rough breakdown in USD:

Groceries: \$50
Eating out: \$70
Transportation: \$50
Housing: \$300
Miscellaneous: \$30
Entertainment: \$30
Total: \$530

I would highly advise getting a travel credit card if you are able to! This has helped me so much as I have been able to avoid foreign transaction fees, gain miles for future travel and rewards for using it. Since Sydney is a big city, all places take cards and this has been more convenient, for me personally, as cash can be easy to misplace or lose track of. Due to covid, most places only accept exact change as well, so that can be harder to manage. The credit card I got also has no annual fee and it is easily managed on an app I have on my phone which directly translates AUD to USD, so I have more of an understanding of how much money I am spending.

It is also advantageous to have some cash both in USD and AUD before even arriving in Australia. I wasn't able to get AUD in my hometown before leaving, but managed to get a currency exchange at the LAX airport. The airport is generally more expensive, so it may be worth trying to order the currency amount through your bank well ahead of time. Carrying small amounts of cash is essential when being out and depending on your laundry situation, you may need change or dollar coins. I would

also recommend saving as much money before your placement as possible. This might be a given, but you'll find that once you're here, money can go pretty easily especially if you're wanting to explore and travel around. Doing small things like having a transportation or rewards card can save you a bit here and there. This is the same for keeping an eye out for promotional offerings, lots of places will offer free meals or delivery for using their service for the first time. I have been able to take advantage of this and get lots of things for free by merely signing up.

Public Transportation

Sydney has phenomenal public transport, in my opinion. You can get pretty much anywhere in the city using the train and/or bus. There are even national parks around the city that I have been able to get to with just a train ride. The main options for getting around locally include: train, light rail, bus and ferry. In terms of longer distances: the train, bus and ferry are still viable options. Since Australia is a pretty large country, getting to other NSW cities can be done by train, but for the most part a car or flight would be better, but pricier, options to go to other states.

I would highly recommend the train for travel over the weekends especially if you are wanting to see other national parks. The ferry is also relatively inexpensive here to get to northern Sydney, and it is a lovely view that you should definitely experience, at least once. GET AN OPAL CARD! You can use your transportation (opal) card for the ferry as well, and usually if you have used your card enough over the week, your ferry ride will be cheap, if not free, over the weekend. There are rewards and cheaper fares associated when you use an opal card, as opposed to your regular credit card. These can be purchased at the newsagent at the train station or certain shops. For later at night or after taking a train ride to a place, the bus is a reliable option. It can take more time and you may have to wait longer, but there is usually always some bus stop nearby.

Ideas of Places to Visit

Hiking places I would recommend future interns travel for weekends that you can get by train/ferry/bus relatively easily and have breathtaking sceneries:

- Blue Mountains National Park *by train*
- Royal National Park *by train, then local ferry*
- Manly Beach (there's a coastal walk you can do from Manly to Spit Bridge) *by train/ferry*
 - Sydney Harbor National Park near Manly *walking* once at Manly
- Coogee to Bondi coastal walk, *by train and bus*
- Walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge (it was free when I did it)

Places around the city, all are free unless indicated by \$, otherwise I would check to see if it pricing has changed as I went just after things had opened up due to covid:

- Sydney opera house
- The Rocks Market Place (open during the weekends)
- Royal Botanic Garden
- The Australian Museum
- Powerhouse Museum
- Museum of Contemporary Art Australia
- Taronga Zoo (\$)

- Haymarket (Chinatown Market and Paddy's Market during the weekends, really cheap souvenirs at Market City!)
- Darling Harbor Bridge
- Holey Moley Mini Golf (\$)
- Sydney State Library
- Kings Cross Saturday Market
- Glebe Markets (Saturday)

Attire/Weather Conditions

- People in Sydney dress in a more formal manner with neutral colors and nicer coats. I would recommend packing staple pieces and items that are able to be layered upon.
- While I came in the winter/early spring I found that the weather can oftentimes flip-flop being so close to the ocean. This is something to keep in mind when packing. Sometimes less is more!
- I made an entire packing list that I stuck to so as to not overpack.
- Remember you will most likely be purchasing things in Sydney or getting souvenirs that you will need space to bring back.
- I learned many basic concepts of a capsule wardrobe that were extremely helpful beforehand, as well.
- The seasons are the exact opposite of what they would be in the United States, so I would keep that in mind when researching what to take.

Finally, enjoy your time! Sydney has earned a very special place in my heart with extraordinary memories that I am able to cherish. I'm sure it will do the same for you if you open yourself up to the Aussie way of living.