

Tips for Interns in Sydney

1. Use an Opal card for public transportation.

You can visit <https://transportnsw.info/trip#/opal-retailers> to find locations on where to buy and /or put money on your Opal card. The cards work for trains, busses, light rails, the metro, ferries, and everything else related to public transportation in Sydney. I use my Opal card every weekday to get to and from work. And on Fridays, I use it to take the light rail all the way down to UNSW to meet some friends. Compared to most places in the U.S., Sydney's public transportation is top-notch. America generally has a very car-centric society, but fortunately for travelers, Sydney isn't like that. You can easily get anywhere in Sydney without a car.

2. Be careful with busses.

I know I just gave a tip about public transport, but I think the busses deserve their own section. On weekends, and at certain times past midnight, many of the usual public transportation options will not be running or will be running in limited capacity. At these times, busses will replace their routes. There will be times when you need to take the busses, but I suggest avoiding them when possible. The busses get crowded more easily than the other options, and they are far less fool proof. It can be difficult just to tell what stop you're at, I usually have to have google maps pulled up so I know when to get off. On top of that, the busses will skip certain stops unless you use a button to tell them not to. When I first rode the bus, I thought these buttons were just meant for emergencies, and I didn't just miss my stop, but the stop after it as well.

3. Unique workplace environment, big city.

When I first started working at my internship, I was surprised by how casual everyone was. It's not at all uncommon to hear swearing in my office, for example. I don't mind it, and if anything I prefer it, but it might be hard for some to get used to. Although, a lot of the other employees that work at different offices in the same building seem to be a bit more proper, so maybe this is just a special case. On that note, if you're working in the "central" part of Sydney, around Town Hall or Circular Quay, you can expect to work in a big fancy skyscraper that houses countless different companies. The building I'm working at has 30 floors, for instance. I wouldn't call my hometown "rural" necessarily, but I've gotten just as much culture shock from living in a big city as I have from living in a different country. You might want to spend some time researching what it's like to live in a highly urban area, if you haven't got experience already.

4. Big city / country geographically.

As I mentioned, Sydney is a big city in the sense that it's very dense and very

tall, but it's also a very big city in terms of area. The Opera House rests near the east end of Sydney. And Penrith, a city that's a part of "Greater Sydney", is near the west end. Using public transport, it would take over 2 hours to get from one to the other. However, I think a more helpful example would be the one that I experienced a few weeks ago. The place I'm staying at is near Kings Cross, and I wanted to visit Bondi Beach over the weekend. If you look at Kings Cross Station and Bondi Beach in google maps, the two of them may seem fairly close together. But in reality, it's a 40-minute bus ride to get from one to the other. All that to say, you'll really want to plan your outings ahead of time and heavily consider the time it takes to get to where you want to go. Similarly, Australia itself is a very big, very spread-out country. If you want to visit anywhere that's not part of Sydney, you'll almost certainly need to book a flight.

5. Clubs

It can be difficult to meet people in Sydney, depending on where you're located. Sydney has active nightlife if that's your thing, but it might be tricky otherwise. My advice would be to start by looking into the college campuses nearest to you and look through their list of clubs for anything that matches your interests. In my experience, most clubs are happy to have non-students show up to their meetings, and it can be a great way to find people in your age range. People in Sydney are quite athletic, so if you're into sports you should have no trouble finding people. But even the most niche of hobbies are likely to have something. If you just google "[hobby] Sydney", you're bound to get at least a few results. As a computer science major, most of my hobbies aren't the most conducive to social interaction, but nearly every college has a club related to gaming in some capacity. If you play fighting games, or you're interested in learning how to play them, fighting game clubs typically have the strongest social aspects. I've been going to UNSW's fighting game club every Friday, and it's been good to have at least one guaranteed moment of the week where I can meet up with people outside of work and hang out.