

This page is dedicated to all the impressions our students have gathered about the every day life surprises in Australia, especially in Sydney: what they like, what they don't like, with no apparent order.... These comments will help you grab what to expect here down under!!!

WE LIKE	WE DON'T LIKE
Very temperate weather, without going into too many extremex, except in Victoria and Tasmania!	The sun here is very strong and dangerous: beware the micro-wave session between 11.30 am and 2.00 pm.
The exotic vegetation (especially for Europeans): Palm trees, ferns, Eucalyptus...	
The exotic fauna you can often see in any green areas: pelicans, ibiscus, multicolored parrots ...	Birds are particularly noisy and unromantic!! Check it out with the magpies, ravens and Kookaburra, the most common birds!!!
In all supermarkets, cashiers pack your shopping in plastic bags	Queues are longer than usual at the cash registers!!
The cashiers weigh and pack your fruit and vegetables	Queues are longer than usual at the cash registers!!
You can withdraw money at supermarkets! Say you have to pay AU\$20 and you need AU\$100 cash. They will charge you a total of AU\$ 120\$ on your debit or credit card and will give you AU\$100 cash!! Very convenient especially that banks here charge for over 12 withdrawals a month!!	
There are everywhere Delis or General Stores open until late at night	Items are pretty expensive!!!
A very sport oriented mentality: you often meet joggers, roller skaters, fast walkers all day ... Most parks have sport facilities and Gyms are the place to be seen more than once a week!!	Remember they drive on the left here!!! ... Be careful during the first month! Besides people drive pretty badly!!! Most Australian sport professionals such as Mark Taylor (cricket) or Ian Thorpe (swimmer) are more respected and hit headlines more than actors, politicians, artists... and lots of TV channels dedicate whole days to sports!!
Lots of free and easy outdoor activities such as bush walking, adventure discoveries at the weekend. They	Public transports should be avoided for this kind of activities: you'd better rent a car between 4 of you!!

are always some beaches and National Parks around!!!

There aren't any monopolies left for telecommunication companies for local and international calls: you can now call any country in Europe and America for less than 5 cents a minute!!

A local call costs *25€ 19c (now thanks to competition)* and for what ever long your call lasts, this is a fixed fee!

Comparative publicity is allowed.

Check SBS radio and TV programmes, they transmit news in a lot of different languages:

[www.sbs.com.au](http://www.sbs.com.au)

The weekly Travel passes combine train, bus and ferries, and prices vary according the zone you are traveling to and fro

Fly screens fixed on windows to avoid insects to enter homes

There are so many operators now, so do some research or ask around you for useful comments!

Beware with your internet provider: most packages mention unlimited connections but after a certain number of kbs, the connection slows down considerably!

Ads on television can drive you crazy on private TVs such as Channel 7, 10 and 9: every 7 minutes, any film is interrupted by a 5 minutes series of ads!! Here a one and half hour film lasts 2 hours and a half!! Better switch to ABC (public TV) or SBS (great TV with programmes in all languages!) to see films without any interruptions!!

Train: you cannot buy tickets in advance, you have to buy your ticket the day you want to travel. You cannot exchange tickets and no discount for students! It's better to buy a weekly ticket if you plan to travel every day!

No underground or metro!! Only trains that travel slowly and very irregularly (don't rely on timetables!), they are often late!

No windows insulation: they open and close badly, creating uncomfortable drafts in windy and winter days!! No shutters to be found, mostly blinds and curtains!!!

No central heating. You have to buy electrical or oil heaters (beware the electricity bill!!!) Often you can find gas heater conducts in modern apartments but you still have to install the stove!!

The letter boxes are tiny: 10 cm x 10 cm and 30 cm deep. Difficult for big envelopes that have to be folded in 2 or 3 to fit in!!

Besides normal garbage bins, recycled bins for all buildings and households for paper wastes and others (glass, plastic...) are provided by the councils

Internal laundry in most houses: a small room dedicated to washing machines and dryers with sink...

Non-smoking rules in all offices!

Air conditioning everywhere

At work: you will often find a fully equipped kitchen on most floors: mini oven, microwave, fridge...

Free coffee, tea and milk all day offered by employers

Friday is a casual day: you don't need to come in with your suit and workers finish early and meet at the local pub!!

Internet banking is a free service.

At post offices, you can buy any accessories linked to sending a letter (all sorts of envelopes, cards, pens, gifts...)

You can often choose with your employers how to be paid your salary: weekly, bi-weekly or monthly!!

Garbage is generally picked up once a week and Australia being a take away country, it does not seem enough!

Internal Laundry rarely present in apartments, you often have to share a common laundry to the building that operates on coins: make sure you collect enough 1 dollar coins!!

Open Space work environment

Air conditioning everywhere, very uncomfortable in summer: you have to go through extreme temperatures: from 40 to 15 degrees celsius, and you get sick easily!

Nothing is organized for lunch: you have to bring your own lunch or buy some take aways, the employers don't participate financially

No help for transport costs from employers

You are limited to 15 withdrawals per month with your debit card. After that you have to pay between 25 to 75 cents for each extra withdrawal or pay a higher monthly fee to have unlimited withdrawals

You have to pay for each use of cheques

All withdrawals operated at ATMs other than your bank cost you AU\$1.5 to become soon AU\$2.00!

Most medical insurances don't refund any special treatments not overseen by GPs or hospitals. Dental, optical, physiotherapy, natural medicine... are extra!

High schools, TAFEs and universities organize each year graduation ceremonies in a remarkable manner!! The most famous ones are: the "Debutant Ball" (for high school graduates), a luxury dance party where everyone has to choose his or her partner months ago and dress black tie; University Graduation ceremonies where each student wears his faculty gown and hat, can invite his family and friends, receives his diploma directly from the university chancellor, and that ends with drinks and food!

Most cars older than 3 years must be controlled and serviced each year.

Traffic is very bearable most of the time and it's still easy to find parking away from the city center, ie beaches, parks...

Chemists are mini supermarkets that sell everything: not only medications but also beauty products, shampoos, sun creams, daily life necessities (umbrellas, postcards...)

If you are invited for lunch or dinner by Australians, especially at the weekend, be sure to be christened to the Aussie barbecue or simply "Barbie" (not to mistake with the Barbie doll!!)

The educational system is copied on the British model: classes terminate early between 2.00 and 3.00pm and most students have to wear uniforms except in some public schools. The number of compulsory subjects are limited according to the students' choice: they can choose whatever they like as long as they reach the sufficient numbers of credits to seat for the High School Leaving Certificate.

There is a strong parallel private education system that is really expensive (AU\$ 16.000 per year) and reserved to a certain elite! You are often judged according to the high school you have graduated from and public schools are definitely on the bottom of the list!!!

The car registration (called "rego" here) is quite expensive: AU\$700 minimum per year: as soon as you buy a car, don't forget to ask about the expiry date of the rego!

Surprisingly in 1998, further to a referendum to ask Australians to become a republic or keep going as a monarchy, Australians voted with a large majority in favour of the monarchy!!! This means that the queen Elizabeth II is still our head of State and since her reign, she may have visited Australia twice!!

It's harder and harder to park in very trendy suburbs and parking can cost a fortune: AU\$4.00 an hour!!! The best tip is to park in shopping centers, the first 2 hours are generally free of charge!!

What is quite surprising is that often you have to bring your own meat and drinks; the sign to confirm this is the 3 magic letters BYO (bring your own) on your invitation!! Same if you go to restaurants: most don't have the liquor licence and you bring your own bottles of wine or pack of beers!! Often at the weekends, restaurants charge you a cork fee (tax to open your

bottles) per person, from AU\$2 à 10.