

VICTORIA BONE: FALL, 2011

I studied abroad thru CIEE in Wollongong, NSW, Australia. I chose Australia because of the many biology classes they offered in English; while there, I was directly enrolled in the University of Wollongong, a big university within 15 minutes of beautiful beaches. I lived in Weerona College, a dormitory near campus with a full meal-plan and students from Australia. I enrolled in Marine Biology and Functional Biology and Animals and Plants, along with an Australian Studies class and Macroeconomics.

Going to Australia is definitely the perfect place for any biology major. The classes were interesting, but the learning style is very different. The teachers do not take roll, and the assignments are very independent. I had a hard time in Marine Biology. The classes were pretty boring, as they were based on powerpoints and heavily on independent reading. The labs, however, were awesome; one day we did a field experiment on mollusks on the rocky shoreline, and we saw a poisonous blue ringed octopus! The Functional Biology of Animals and Plants class was really interesting; we dissected all sorts of animal parts, and also learned about the form and function of plants. Unfortunately, the marine biology class was really challenging, and I brought back the worst grade I have ever received in a biology course. The Function class was awesome, and I was also able to study and do well, so I would recommend that one, if possible. My friends who were in lots of classes in other subjects did not struggle in their classes. I would recommend that anyone going abroad take only one biology class while there.

Whenever I thought about going abroad it felt like I didn't have time as a biology major, but going somewhere like Australia is definitely a solution to that! If I could go back and do it again, I would also consider Australian cities farther north, and even the SIT program near the Great Barrier Reef that is based on Environmental Sustainability. I loved Wollongong, but it was an hour away from Sydney and anytime I wanted to travel I had to go there first.

Overall, I would recommend CIEE Wollongong to anyone who wants to visit a country with similar culture and language to ours and directly enroll into a big university near the coast. Spending a semester in Australia is not for someone who is seeking a bold cultural experience; life there is very similar to life here. Also, I would only recommend a semester in Australia to someone with ATLEAST \$4000 spending money. The Australian dollar is very strong right now, and things are more expensive there anyway (Bottled Coke= \$4.25 at the grocery store), so committing to travel to Australia is a big financial decision, as well.

I had an amazing experience down under while abroad; I visited the Great Barrier Reef, the Whitsundays, Sydney and Melbourne. I celebrated my birthday holding a koala at world famous Surfer's Paradise. I explored caves and mountains and glaciers in New Zealand, and drank kava with chiefs in Fiji. Australia offers us so many opportunities for travel, and it is such a BIG place, that you will never run out of things to do and see!

Studying abroad was the best decision I have ever made at Wofford, and I would recommend it to anyone, especially Biology majors.