

Kangaroos, Koalas and Surfing - My Exchange 'Down Under'

On the 5th of February, I was saying goodbye to my family at the airport knowing well that I wouldn't see them for the next two and a half months. But somehow I wasn't nervous or sad, just pure excitement pumped through my body. And that's how my adventure began...

After a long flight, including a layover in Doha, me and the other 62 students from Bavaria finally landed in Melbourne, Australia. As soon as my host family had spotted me in the crowd, they came over and greeted me warmly. I immediately felt welcome and at home with them, a feeling that wouldn't change. Still now that I've been in Germany for a couple of months again, I know in my heart that I have a second family in Australia.

While spending my time 'down under', I experienced so many 'firsts', for example seeing my first kangaroo, watching my first Australian football match, eating Australian lollies for the first time. My first school day was also quite different: I wasn't used to having to wear a school uniform including special school shoes as well as to attending different classes like cooking, psychology or outdoor experience. However, I loved to talk to new people who were all super nice and interested in me as a person but also asked questions about Germany - I can really confirm that the cliché of Aussies being so open and easy-going is totally true. Thus, I quickly made new friends.

My host family had planned plenty of activities for us to do on the weekends. Me and my host sister Chloe went to Melbourne, which was a one-hour-drive from where I lived, a few times. She gave me a little sightseeing tour of the city which included riding the elevator to one of the highest buildings there and seeing the city from a bird's point of view. My host family also took me on their boat and we had a lot of fun swimming in the ocean. We even saw dolphins and a seal one time, it was amazing. They showed me a little island, called Philips Island, where we watched the tiniest penguins waddling across the beach – that was so cute. I also had the opportunity to cuddle a koala and feed some kangaroos.

The organisation I did my exchange with – Bayerischer Jugendring – offered us German exchange students to spend a week at a camp in Wilson's Promontory National Park where I tried surfing for the first time. It was so much fun and without question something I will definitely be doing again.

My overall highlight of the whole stay was our weekend trip to Sydney though. When I saw the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge for the first time, I really had to ask someone to pinch me since I couldn't believe my eyes. The next day, they surprised me with a bridge climb to the top of the Harbour Bridge. I'll be forever grateful and I'll never forget the moment when I and my host sister were standing right on top it looking down on the city.

I was incredibly sad when had to leave my new won home with the loveliest people I get to call my second family and friends.

If someone asked me if I would do it again, I wouldn't hesitate to say yes!

My advice for everyone who is interested in spending some time abroad is: Just do it!

Even though it might be scary to think of, it is definitely worth it and you'll look back at lots of new memories.

If you plan to do a similar exchange and have any further questions, please feel free to contact me via our school app 'Talk'. You will find me under my name:

Laura Weierer

Some impressions:



