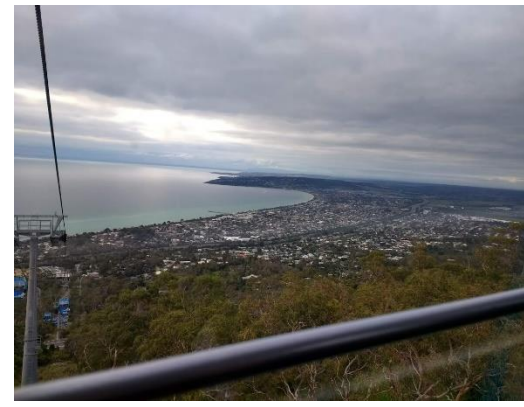


My Time in Australia

James Evenden



My time in Australia will be one I will never forget. It was everything I could have asked for and more, and I am so thankful to BASET for giving me this life changing opportunity that I know will influence the rest of my life. I feel so incredibly lucky and I still cannot quite believe I was even there, it felt so surreal. The people I met were brilliant and really friendly. The English class had a farewell for me for my last lesson in that class, a testament to the community I was able to be a part of at Haileybury Melbourne.

I stayed with the Stephen family for the whole four weeks of my stay. Normally you would stay with two families for two weeks each but they could not find another family that would take me. This turned out to be the best thing that could have happened because I got to know my family really well, and by the end I didn't just feel like an exchange student living there, I felt like I was a part of their family, if even for a short while. The son, Will, could not have been nicer to me and I loved getting to know him as I shadowed him at Haileybury Melbourne. I keep in touch with him and I plan to keep doing this. Going to the school was really interesting because I was able to see what the life of a private school student was really like. I was surprised, although looking back I don't know if this was obvious or not, by the amount of work they had to do outside school, and the immense pressure placed on the students. Will was a year younger than me and had to work harder than I have ever had to work at my school. This was the most interesting thing I discovered about student life at Haileybury Melbourne. Will was always working. Maisy and I were also able to visit three of the four campuses, Brighton, Keysborough and City. These all had a different atmosphere to them, with the hustle and bustle of Keysborough compared to the metropolitan buzz of City. My favourite was City, as it felt the most unique to me. The novelty of being in a vertical school in which you have to take a lift to get to different floors for lessons never wore off on me, even if this would wear off quickly if you were a full-time student there. Being able to write on the windows in classes and be looking over the spectacular cityscape of Melbourne was amazing and one of my favourite memories of my school life whilst there. Being based at Brighton was the most ideal, however. The relative quiet of that campus compared to the other two allowed me to settle in quickly, and it was not as overwhelming as it would have been going to Keysborough or City. I have to mention Miss Lee, the teacher at the Brighton campus who was our contact in Australia, always available to answer any questions we had. Without her, neither me or Maisy would have been able to live life to the full in Melbourne like we did. I am indebted to her.

I saw more views and breath-taking vistas during my stay than I have ever done before. From the beauty of the Great Ocean Road, to the vibrancy of the city. I went to so many places, including an Aussie-rules football match, Richmond vs. Collingwood, the Botanical Gardens,

Eureka Skydeck, Healsville Sanctuary, the Shrine of Remembrance and Federation Square in the heart of the city. It is safe to say these are places I will remember for a long time. My favourite place was the Eagle cable car ride I took, getting a view of all of Melbourne, the picture of this is above. In that moment, I not only felt a sense of pride that I was able to achieve something so unique like this trip, and an overwhelming sense of gratitude to everyone that had been involved in making all this possible up to that point. My parents, teachers, BASET representatives, and Maisy for sharing this wild ride with me. That is the point when everything came into focus and I realised just how lucky I am. It felt almost profound to me, this moment overlooking a far-off distant land I never thought I would get to experience. Whenever I begin to complain about anything, whether it be with work or family, I think about this moment, and I stop complaining, which my parents seem to really like too.

From this trip I have gotten a sense of independence I could not have gotten apart from travelling to the other side of the world without my parents to help me, for a whole month and left to find my own adventure whilst out there. I now feel much more confident about going to University next year, knowing that my BASET experience will guide me in being out on my own. I think now I will be able to settle into a new environment easier and make friends quicker as a result of my trip. I learnt the value of hard work and the value of a good work ethic through Will having to work so hard consistently. Going into my last year, I am so thankful this lesson was drilled into me so I can use it.

I took lots of pictures whilst I was out there, and so it was hard to pick a favourite, one that I feel best sums up my time in Melbourne. I chose this one:



This is a picture of me and the Stephen family on the last Saturday of my trip, we went out to a restaurant called Romeo's. This is my favourite picture because it reminds me of the kindness I was greeted with, and the generosity they had for taking me in for the full four weeks. By this time, I felt totally comfortable with them and we had a great time. This brings back fond memories of the times I shared with them.