

Australia Trip - Tom

First and foremost, I would like to express my upmost gratitude towards everyone who helped to make this dream of mine a reality; thank you to Mrs Shivalkar, Dr Muller, Mr McGregor, Mr Jonson, Harry, the Shinskys and everyone involved within BASET, the Haileybury Rendell School and in Melbourne (amongst so many other people) who helped make this journey become one of the best few weeks of my life.

The Flight

We had a couple of issues pre-flight as we were initially told check-in the day before our flight which we could not as we were below 18. However, that was fine as after we called Mrs Shivalkar it was put down to using a new airline. When we got to the airport, there was further confusion as we had to sign a waiver. However, once we had got past security that is where our journey really began. Being my first ever flight I was eager to look around the airport. After looking at all the overpriced food we eventually bought our meals and snacks and got ready to board 14-hour flight to Singapore. We ran into another issue after we realised our seats were not together but after we asked, and a man offered to move, we thanked him and then boarded our flight. It worked out in the end as we got the two aisle seats. When we landed in Singapore, we were both starstruck by the airport. During our 4-hour layover we watched a film in their free cinema and walked around their butterfly garden before boarding our second flight to Darwin.

Introduction to Darwin

When our plane landed in Darwin, this is when the experience first started to feel real. After we landed, we were greeted by Harry at the airport. He welcomed us to Darwin before we drove in the minibus to what would be our first sights of Haileybury Rendell Boarding. Once we arrived there, we got given our room keys before starting to unpack before Alfonso who was there on his gap year gave us a tour around the campus. On our first full day at breakfast, we met someone who would become one of the staples of our Darwin journey and that was Rahiri who was like a big brother to us and everyone at boarding.

Darwin School Life

During our time at school in Darwin we got to meet so many amazing people from the students to the teachers. I am grateful to each and every one of them. For my subjects I had Maths, English, Accounting, Sociology and Business and Management. These were mostly similar to what I study in England however with a few slight changes such as English as it is mandatory in Darwin. I also studied maths as they had not introduced Economics for Year 12s however, they had introduced for Year 11s. I had the luxury of experiencing the culture differences when it comes to their style of teaching through some amazing teachers such as Mrs Richie and Miss Vo. During week 2 when we had Friday off, we signed out of boarding to go to a national park with some of the day students. We went to Litchfield which I would heavily recommend going to if you get the chance.

School Boarding and Aboriginal Culture

From the moment I got to boarding I felt a part of the family, it is one of the best and most welcoming communities I have ever been a part of; I loved every moment of it. Despite the limited number of things, you could do I did not feel bored for a second from playing basketball to playing (and winning) table tennis to playing cards with everyone before bed. All of those involved from Freddie to Rahiri to Alfonso made these some of the best times of my trip. I could go on and on about what we did with our little resources. One of the most interesting parts of the trip was when

Rahiri and Robben took us into their boarding room and took us through Aboriginal Australian culture and told us stories about what they have experienced first-hand even showing us a movie that demonstrates Aboriginal Australian history from the best to the worst of it. I also did outdoor education for a week in school which also taught me a lot about Aboriginal culture. During our time in Darwin, we also went to the Darwin show where we went on lots of rides and for one of the rides, I was convinced by Rahiri to go on to it just for him to pull out last minute. This was one of many activities we did on the weekend which included beach walks which gave me some of the best views I have ever seen in my life, having never left the UK, to seeing sunsets like the ones at Darwin was the shock of a lifetime. Those images are still burned into my memory. I can never forget them and no image can ever do them justice. Watching the sunset at the beach with those around me really felt like this was what this trip was all about, and I loved it. We also went to other places such as a water park where Alfonso was not a fan of the fast water slide. We also went to shopping centres where we were introduced to Coles Cookies by Rahiri, and I will never look at UK cookies the same now! Those same cookies we would use for movie nights with me, Rahiri, Robben and Freddie. We also went to markets where I bought some souvenirs. The bus journeys and the karaoke we had was some of the most fun I had on the trip. I cannot thank everyone there enough; thank you Rahiri, Chloe, Robben, Alfonso, Harry, all the house parents amongst so many other people and I would be here all day if I named them all.

Melbourne

When we landed in Melbourne, we were greeted by Mr Johnson alongside the families we would be staying with. For me it was the Shinksys, with Jemima and her mum Liz being there to greet me. I hit it off with both of them immediately as it was a long car journey (roughly an hour) to their house, so we had plenty of time to get to know each other. Again, like in Darwin I again felt a part of the family from the moment I got there. When I got to their house I was introduced to Max (brother) and Ben (dad) as well as Pig (cat) and Fred (dog) and halfway through the week Sam (brother) came back from school in Hong Kong. After hitting it off with Liz and Jemima I also immediately became close with Max and Ben. Throughout the week we enjoyed many activities and I played a lot of games of Yatzi against Max (which I won most of whatever he claims!) We also went to the cinema. On one of the days, we all went to the zoo which allowed me to finally see a kangaroo in person and it did not disappoint. I also made a candle with Jemima as well as going to her formal which was fun. Some of the best things to do was in their garden which had a Jacuzzi (which was the best part of the garden), a pool, a basketball court, a trampoline, and a massive TV. The Jacuzzi was especially nice due to the drastic change in weather from Darwin to Melbourne. I also got to watch my first AFL game with the mighty Port Adelaide where I found my favourite AFL player Aliir Aliir. Afterwards they introduced me to their favourite yogurt place and me wanting to get my money's worth filled up my pot to where it was overflowing before discovering its cost was based on weight! It was a close game with an amazing atmosphere, and I loved every moment of it. I did not have as much chance to experience school life in Melbourne as in the 5 weekdays I was there 2 were half days and 1 was a day off, however in my brief time in school I met so many amazing people including Lenny who I spent most my time with. I also had many long chats with Ben about whether England or Australia were better at sports as the Olympics were on and although I knew in the back of my mind, he was right I kept arguing on to defend England. On my final day I got to watch Jemima's AFL game where her team won by over 100 points! Throughout my time in Melbourne, I was told by my new family that they have never seen anyone gel as quickly as I have and that was because of how amazing and kind they were to me; I felt like I was a member of the family from the moment I got there.

Overall

This was the best 4 weeks of my life, and I cannot thank everyone involved. I loved each and every person who I met and who helped me along this journey. I learnt so much and have grown so much as a person. To finally have my first experience of being on a plane and it to be to the other side of the earth in Australia that's life defining stuff. I have come back to the UK with a new level of confidence and social confidence. I did not even think about home for a moment while out there because I felt so at home while I was there. If I had to use one word to describe it, it would be ineffable because words cannot describe how much that meant to me. I would like to say one more thank you to everyone involved; thank you Mrs Shivalkar, thank you Dr Muller, thank you Mr McGregor, thank you Mr Johnson, thank you Harry, thank you to Jemima, Max, Sam, Liz and Ben Shinsky thank you to Rahiri, thank you to Robben, thank you to Lenny, thank you everyone at BASET and thank you to everyone else I met you have made this the time of my life and I am eternally grateful to you for that. Thank you all for the best month of my life I will never forget any of you. I hope one day I can come back and see you all again.

