

Griffith University Study Tour 2017

From Kobe Gakuin University

August 17 to September 10



Richard Miller



Study Tour 2017

During the summer of 2017 Kobe Gakuin University (KGU) offered two short term study abroad programs (Canada and Australia). There were 10 students from different faculties who signed up to participate in the Australia study abroad program. The program was from August 16th to September 10th at Griffith University's two main Brisbane campuses: Mount Gravatt and Nathan. The purpose of the program was to learn; not only English, but a variety of different things including culture and life skills.

Getting ready

While the trip started in the summer, preparations for the 2017 Australia study abroad program started long before it was first advertised in April and had a lot of interest from students all over the university. There were two information sessions held that were open to all students and during which there were videos introducing Australia and Griffith University. The staff and senior students who had taken the program in the past were on hand to answer questions from the audience.

All students who wanted to go applied, wrote an essay and were interviewed. The interview process with three faculty members taking notes and asking questions that helped determine their suitability for joining the program. The questions and discussion took place mainly in English with the results of the assessment sent to the applicants afterward.

For those students selected to participate in the trip there were two classes (June 26th and 28th) that were taught at the Port Island Campus English Plaza in order help everyone to prepare. These were held in the English Plaza room, and included the students who were also going to go to Canada (John Abbott College) at almost the same time, making a class that was around 20 students. Teaching the classes were a Canadian (Richard Miller), as well as an Australian (Andy Sowter), which made the lessons quite interesting and relevant for everyone.

During the preparatory classes, all members were required to work together on several different things. The first class was to brainstorm countries, watch a short video and to think about what they wanted to do overseas. There was homework assigned for the next class where they would discuss different answers to their homework answers-all based on either Canada or Australia. These international topics were designed to develop the students understanding of the expected place of study. During the next class, there was a short video to get the students thinking about what many foreigners thought about Japan (called '*Japan the Strange County!*'). It had some surprises, and was followed up by group work with both easy and difficult questions that might be asked of the students while overseas. The questions were difficult, but good practice!

The Journey



On the day of departure, August 16th, meeting a few hours before the flight at Kansai Airport made the trip easier to start with, and it was nice to have the support of JTB. All members were easily checked in early leaving time for shopping and snacks before flight.

The LCC, EasyJet, flew from Osaka to Cairns at first, and the eight hour flight was at night, so after a supper everyone could all sleep and wake up in Australia. Everyone received a travel set that included a blanket and other travel accessories. There was breakfast and then still time to get ready before arriving in the country. With a few hours wait in Cairns, there was even time to sightsee around the airport before taking the final short flight to Brisbane.

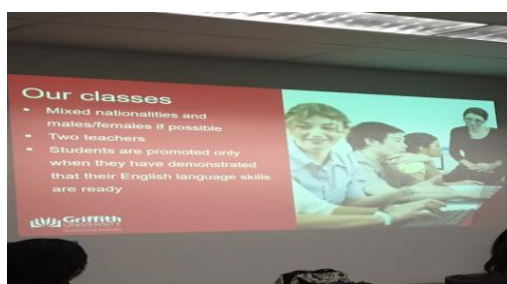


It was still morning upon arrival in Brisbane as the group was met by the transport company, 360 travel, who was to be our contact points a through the trip, and the ride through to the Nathan Campus was excellent. After being dropped off by the Ecology-Centre, the group was met by the homestay coordinator. While waiting to be picked up by their host families, everyone could see a huge wild python in the tree just outside of the Eco-Centre Building. With a mild winter in the southern hemisphere, the weather was a lot cooler than Japan, so it was sunny and balmy- a great start to the three and a half week trip.

Griffith University

Early on Friday morning, the orientation took place at the Mount Gravatt Campus Griffith English Language Institute (GELI). During this time students were familiarized with the rules of the program and the facilities that were accessible with a campus tour. There are a lot of resources on campus and everyone was given Wi-Fi access and a library card. The location is beautiful, and there were opportunities to learn about everything available- from sports (tennis, swimming pool, gym, tennis courts and so on), to the various study

areas, the bus system (inter-campus buses and the Brisbane City bus), stores and cafeterias. The two campuses of Griffith that the students studied at were the Mount Gravatt; and Nathan Campuses, and are located within the beautiful and quiet Toohy Forest. All around Brisbane convenient public transport made it easy to go all over the city and region with numerous city buses and the train system.



The first weekend – EKKA



The first weekend in Brisbane was good timing as there was the annual festival known as Ekka that took place near downtown Brisbane. It is a large show that included a farm show with animals as well as food and drinks. Everyone joined this and there were different games, rides and shows to see-the Kobe Gakuin University basketball club member, Satsuki, could easily win a big basketball in a game competition. Amusement rides on site were very exciting and defied gravity, and were ridden by everyone.

The next day many of the members took a trip to the Gold Coast to see the area that is known as Surfers Paradise. The area gained popularity for Japanese and became famous in the 1980's and early 1990's as the booming bubble economy saw a surge in Japanese visitors and investment. Much of that early influence is still there and therefore a large number of restaurants, amusement areas and shops.



CLASSES in GELI

For the first two weeks of English classes, students were divided into different levels and were then mixed with other international students learning together at the Mount Gravatt campus. That gave everyone opportunities to meet different nationalities and cultures that ranged from Asian to Mid-Eastern to Latin American. The classes started at 8:30am and ended at 12:45pm, with a break in the middle. In all classes there were assignments, tests and different programs that took place during the class time. Daily, all Kobe Gakuin participants had lunch, eating together in the Mount Gravatt Campus Cafeteria. The building was spacious and included ping pong tables, lots of different types of chairs and great weather every day.